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PERSONAL FORCES  
IN MODERN LITERATURE

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*Dante Gabriel Rossetti,  
from the drawing by himself in the National Portrait Gallery.*



# PERSONAL FORCES IN MODERN LITERATURE

BY

ARTHUR RICKETT



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“Surely, whoever speaks to me in the right voice  
Him or her I shall follow  
As the water follows the moon silently  
With fluid steps anywhere around the Globe.”

WALT WHITMAN.

## PREFACE

THE papers in the present volume are not intended as contributions to critical literature. They are of a pioneer character, and are concerned rather with the "personal equation" of the writers discussed than with the purely literary aspects of their work. Originally delivered in the form of lectures, they retain the more colloquial form of "the thing spoken." My excuse for publishing them is that in the form of lectures they served to kindle interest in the personalities of the writers and lead to a study of the originals.

The authors dealt with cover many fields of thought—philosophy, science, poetry, fiction, criticism—but the guiding principle in the selection of names has been to exhibit as great a diversity of temperament as possible. The "moralist" leads the way, as the one who exhibits his temperament as much by what he suppresses as by what he expresses of himself. And the series closes with the "vagabond," who flings himself unreservedly at the reader, whims, peculiarities and all. Thus an attempt at sequence is made, not on literary but on psychological grounds. From the moralist to the vagabond, self-revelation

## PREFACE

becomes gradually more intimate in its nature, until the words spoken by Whitman of his *Leaves of Grass* can be applied to the writings of the later types:—"This is no book; who touches this touches a man."

Too much has been said in elementary essays such as these of the "messages" of this or that great man; so even when dealing with the moralists the "human note" has been emphasised in preference to what may be called the "pulpit note" in literature.

Literature, indeed, has been regarded in these fugitive papers as temperament expressed in terms of art.

After all, the compelling power of the great organ tones of literature depends largely upon the sweetness of the "vox humana."

# THE PREACHER

“Your business is to paint the souls of men.”  
BROWNING.



## CARDINAL NEWMAN

ONE cannot tabulate religious genius. It were like picking up that sealed bottle of Arabian fame, remarking to an onlooker, "There is a genie inside here," and then dismissing the subject as if one had measured the genie's dimensions and characteristics by pointing to the bottle. Every genius has to creep inside the narrow compass of some creed or formula: but if you would wish to estimate him, do not do so by looking at him through the formula, the dogma, the creed; try to detach him from his creed, and if he is not so terrifying as the genie in the Arabian story, he may equally amaze you as a student of character and a seeker after truth.

Let us examine certain aspects of Newman's influence. At the outset we are met by the extraordinary way in which Newman evades a characteristic label. He has been called, and rightly so, a "mystic," a "brilliant controversialist," a "scholar-recluse," and yet the general impression concerning him that he was a sensitive and kindly ascetic, with a certain aloofness from the world of affairs, is not quite a correct one.

So much has been written upon him from the theological and philosophical point of view, that the human

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point of view has been obscured. In fact, if we speak quite frankly, the view of the ordinary man as regards Newman is that of a clever and rather crafty old scholar, who lacked straightforwardness and would try to entangle you in some dialectical difficulty; one, moreover, who was at heart a bit of a sceptic himself, and certainly not one who had much about him likely to interest and attract other than the theological students.

The phrase "mystic" carries within its popular meaning something out of touch with everyday life. It seems to denote a dweller in cloudland. And a mystic in that sense Newman was not. Indeed, he was less of a mystic than Maurice, and more alive to the fluctuations of modern thought than Kingsley. "His senses," says one of his intimate friends, "were keenly alive to the small things of earth. How delicately he weighs in *Loss and Gain* \* the respective attractions of sights, scents and sounds." John Froude has told us how, in his Oxford days, he was interested in everything which was going on in science, and politics, and literature. He was a mystic only in the sense that he was a poet and felt that there was a great reality at the heart of things, behind all the constant process of phenomena, and hence comes a popular impression that he loved the half lights of thought and shrunk from definite statement. That he sheltered himself behind the mysteries—half afraid of them, yet constitutionally

\* *Problems and Persons* (WILFRID WARD).

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unable to do without a superstitious worship of them—is quite wrong.

Newman, says one of his severest critics,\* is like Mill, a lover of clear, definite, tangible statements. There is no danger with him of losing ourselves in that mystical haze which irritates and bewilders the ordinary commonsense of mankind. Indeed, his own admissions support Mr Stephen's contention. From the age of fifteen, he tells us, dogma had been the fundamental principle of his religion. Literature was his enemy, because by literature he meant the anti-dogmatic principle—the principle which would convert religion into a sentiment, and therefore for him into a dream, a mockery. No one, of course, could be more sensitive to the mysterious element in theology, but in his view dogma is not the less definite for being mysterious.

His reputation as a controversialist has obscured his very sensible, and alas! too rarely appreciated, views as to the value of controversy. And yet he has said that, if views were clearly stated and candidly received, all controversy would be either superfluous or useless—superfluous to those who agreed in first principles, useless to those who differed fundamentally. He was singularly like Browning in his hatred of mere academic discussion. With a man who came once and pompously requested some points on the education problem, he conversed earnestly (one can imagine the twinkle in his eye) on the barley crop in Norfolk.

\* *Agnostic's Apology* (LESLIE STEPHEN).

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Another visitor, who had girded himself up for an intellectual discussion, he harangued on the number of stoppages on the 1.30 train as contrasted with the 3.40. Then there is the Oxford story of Newman's guest who introduced the *Origin of Evil* at dinner, and produced a dissertation full of exact knowledge, and apparently delivered with extreme absorbing interest, as to the different ways of treating hot-house grapes.

To the earnest, anxious student he was ever accessible; ready to help and advise, and kindly and shrewd in counsel. But he had a keen insight into character, and had no patience with pomposity or priggishness, or idle curiosity. With all his learning no one despised more heartily the mere pedant.\* What could be more happily expressed than this criticism of the Casaubon type: "Such are only possessed by their knowledge, not possessed of it; nay, in matters of fact they are often even carried away by it, without any volition of their own. . . . I am not denying that a strong and ready memory is in itself a treasure; I am not disparaging a well-stored mind, though it be nothing besides, so that it be sober, any more than I would despise a bookseller's shop; it is of great value to others even when not to the owner. Nor am I banishing—far from it—the possession of deep and multifarious learning from my ideal university; they adorn it in the eyes

\* *Vide* WILFRID WARD, *Problems and Persons*. Other of his friends, also, bear this out.

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of men. I do but say that they constitute no type of the results at which it aims; that it is no fresh gain to the intellect to have enlarged the memory at the expense of faculties which are indisputably higher."

Let us notice some special points about Newman's personality as revealed in literature, which may serve to explain his remarkable influence.

In the first place, his literary style expressed most admirably the temper and tone of the writer. It was a beautiful style—not beautiful with the rich glow of Ruskin's penmanship; nor with the graceful urbanity of Arnold; nor with the fantastic suggestiveness of De Quincey, but beautiful with a limpid lucidity, a chastened eloquence, a gentle persuasiveness.

Like Arnold and Ruskin he was a master of irony; but he was more serious than Arnold and less volcanic than Ruskin. His style is not so magnificent as Ruskin's—Ruskin at his best is unapproachable—but he had none of Ruskin's rhetorical devices which marred the beauty of some of his prose. Few writers are so unimpeachable in taste or wrote on so consistently high a level as Newman.

None of his admirers have written more happily about his style than Mr Hutton.

"It is a style," he writes, "that more nearly represents a clear atmosphere than any other which I know in English literature. It flows round you, it presses

\* *Modern Guides of English Thought.*

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gently on every side of you, and yet like a steady current carrying you in one direction too. On every facet of your heart you feel the light touch of his purpose, and yet you cannot escape the general drift of his movements more than the ship can escape the drift of the tide. He never said anything more characteristic than when he expressed his conviction that though there are a hundred difficulties in faith, into all of which he could enter, the hundred difficulties are not equal to a single doubt. That saying is most characteristic of his style, which seems to be sensitive in the highest degree to a multitude of hostile influences which are at once appreciated and resisted, while one predominant and over-ruling power moves steadily on."

Many people who have heard much of Newman's style are disappointed on a first acquaintance, and this is explicable if they look for those qualities that impress one so in Martineau and Ruskin. There is a severe simplicity about it which bewilders those who connect a fine style necessarily with richness of colouring. Hutton is exactly right when he speaks of its luminousness as being the luminousness of the other. The clear, liquid tranquillity which marks it is as remarkable in its way and as potent an influence upon the reader as the stately harmonies of Martineau or the vibrant rhetoric of Ruskin. There is suavity and cogency here, and a perfectly just appreciation of the spiritual basis of the highest poetry—spiritual, not necessarily religious, any more than

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the sense of wonder and awe carries with it necessarily a belief in a personal God.

Reading Newman's temperament through his delightfully pellucid style, we are struck by certain personal characteristics which help to explain the deep and far-reaching influence of the man.

First, I think, a peculiar power of sensitive sympathy.

His was not a dominating personality that sweeps everything before it. There are men—poets, social reformers—who are possessed by a few vital ideas, see these ideas under the brilliant light of enthusiasm to the exclusion of others, and make their mark in the world through their superb one-sidedness.

There is need of such men always. The great reformer is ever such an one, and much of the practical and constructive work of the world is done by such men.

There are others, critical by nature, who are keenly sensitive to the *pros* and *cons*, and whose subtle intellects expose them to difficulties of which the average man knows nothing. Newman was a man of this kind. None knew better than he that some kind of active faith was essential to a man who wishes to do some genuine work in life. He appreciated the paralysing effect of doubt: he was alive to the criticism of the scoffer that religion makes little difference to many men's lives. He knew the seductive power of the senses, for he was an artist in his own way, and the possibilities of human nature for good and evil appalled him.

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And a good deal that he wrote which seemed hesitating and casuistical, which provoked men of simpler, rougher natures, was due to his sensitiveness to every form of intellectual difficulty and to subtle moral temptations and to his desire to meet them as far as possible.

Beginning, it is said,\* at Oxford among young men, his equals in age many of them, passing into the comparative obscurity of the Birmingham Oratory, living there unseen by the world at large, and holding for many years no position of official importance, his personality, so unobtrusive that it is hard to account for it, made itself felt over the whole country. Leading the simple, consistent life of a priest, ever ready to help those who came to him, or wrote to him for advice, shunning the crowd, welcoming each individual, helping each according to his character to live rightly, never seeking influence for his own sake, thinking only of those he was helping, grateful for their trust but deeply feeling its sacredness before God, and his responsibility for the use he made of it, throwing himself into the position of each of those who consulted him as if each were the only one, he gained steadily in immediate influence as life went on; while the power of a devoted life, as a witness to the unseen world, made its way to the crowds who form public opinion. "It would be hard," says Mr Wilfrid Ward, "to estimate the number of those who sought his help during the last forty years of his life

\* *Problems and Persons* (WILFRID WARD).



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in theological matters, and many have been guided by him in other matters. In his measure, and allowing for the difference of gifts and circumstances, he carried out the kind of work done by his own St Philip, which early in his Catholic life he had spoken of as the only work he had a call to do. As St Philip, by his love for those who leant upon him, and by his personal character, drew all men to him for guidance and advice, so did Newman by the power of his personality find himself the centre of influence among vast numbers."

Of St Philip, Newman himself has written: "He preferred to yield to the stream and direct the current which he could not stop of science, literature, art and fashion, and to sweeten and sanctify what God had made very good and man had spoilt."

This exactly describes Newman himself. There was something submissive and dependent about his attitude; he preferred to yield to the stream, but while yielding he acquainted himself with the nature of every current and cross-current: he was a clever navigator.

One result of Newman's influence has been to give Englishmen a fairer appreciation of the Catholic position—a position which the Saxon mind has always had a perverse tendency to misunderstand, much of it being so alien to the practical spirit of the nation. We are an ethical people, but we are not a religious people; that is to say, we have plenty of good feeling as to right and bad conduct, but little imagination as to the borders of the finite and infinite.

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Our debt to Newman in this respect, in stirring our spiritual imagination, has been admirably alluded to by Martineau in his writings. Martineau is not alone, but I select Martineau, who in his theology so profoundly differs from Newman and whose testimony to Newman's greatness therefore is less open to the charge of friendly leniency than the words of friends and allies such as Mr Wilfrid Ward and Mr W. S. Lilly, or even such a Newman enthusiast as the late R. H. Hutton. Few even of educated Englishmen, as Martineau says, have any suspicion of the depth and solidity of the Catholic dogma, its wide and various adaptations to wants ineffaceable from the human heart, its wonderful fusion of the supernatural into the natural life, its vast resources for a powerful hold upon the conscience. A true British Protestant, whose notions of Popery are limited to what he hears from an evangelical curate, looks on the whole system as an absolute mumming, and no more believes that men of sense can seriously adopt it than they will be converted to the practice of eating their dinner with a Chinaman's chop-sticks instead of the knife and fork. He pictures to himself a number of celibate gentlemen who glide through a sort of minuet by candle-light around the altar and keep the Bible out of everybody's way, and make people easy about their sins, and he is positive that no one above a "poor Irishman" can fail to see through such nonsense.\* No doubt many well-meaning "go-

\* Vide *Essays and Reviews and Addresses* (Martineau), vol. i.

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to-meeting " folk still sturdily hold by this opinion. The influence of men, however, like Newman and Ward in particular, also of Pusey and Keble, and many a high Anglican of to-day, has done much to moderate this narrow-minded attitude.

And this brings me to the second characteristic of Newman's—his sincerity.

In so doing I know that I am venturing on controversial ground, for many who admire his intellectual power and admit to his charm of personality, yet purse up their lips at what they call his " shiftiness " or " trickiness." He is held by some to have justified his theological and ecclesiastical position at the expense of his intellectual honesty. Many excellent men have held this—men so far apart as Charles Kingsley and Leslie Stephen. Therefore, the charge cannot be met by mere denial or evasion. He has not needed champions both Roman and Anglican, but they have been more interested perhaps as theologians than psychologists to vindicate his character. At any rate it seems worth while approaching the question from a non-theological, non-ecclesiastical point of view, and inquiring into the question of Newman's sincerity and examining his controversial methods.

One of the grave charges brought against him is that his religion is a religion of fear. Another that he was a sceptic who was afraid of his scepticism ; another that he used facts for his own purpose as a special pleader, desiring only to make the very best

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of his case and to suppress facts that seemed hostile. These three charges all fundamentally connected are very serious ones. If they be true, then Newman's influence has certainly been an unwholesome one, and his very charm as a man and a writer had made his teachings the more pernicious.

To deal with these charges in full would require far more detailed consideration of his writings than I have time to devote. But no consideration of Newman, however brief, can avoid dealing broadly with this hostile attack, and I must, after indicating the lines of inquiry, leave you to follow the subject up for yourselves.

Now let us briefly examine the scope and character of Newman's important works. That is a necessary preface.

First of all there are the "Tracts" by which he endeavoured to fix a *via media* between Romanism and Protestantism and to vindicate the Anglo-Catholic position. That he attempted to read into the "Thirty-Nine Articles" more than they could fairly bear he would have admitted. Enthusiasm often leads a man to defend an indefensible position, but it does not follow that he is not perfectly sincere in his defence. He would have failed in sincerity if, on finding the weakness of his position, he had remained in the Anglican Church. This he did not do, and it cost him many a bitter pang to follow the logical results of his own reasoning.

After his conversion Newman published some re-

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markable books. The first—his autobiography, his spiritual autobiography, *Apologia pro vita sua*," perhaps from our point of view the most significant of his writings (1865).

To some this book seems a sophistical and evasive defence of his religious opinions; to others a beautifully sincere and earnest confession of faith.

Everything, you may say, depends upon whether the reader is or is not a Catholic or an Anglican in sympathy with the writer's doctrinal opinion. Not at all. Everything depends upon how far the writer faithfully and honestly interprets his own temperament.

What we have to look for is some keynote; that found, the book becomes comprehensible. The keynote may, I think, be found on page 49: "From the age of fifteen, dogma has been the fundamental principle of my religion. I know no other religion; I cannot enter into the idea of any other sort of religion. Religion as a mere sentiment is to me a dream and a mockery." Here we have a very distinct point of view, and one that must be thoroughly grasped before we proceed further. There are three types of temperament to which dogma appeals in a quite different way.

The first may be called the "passionate" temperament, the second the "perceptive," the third the "reflective." This does not mean that passion is alien to the second or reflection divorced from the first; merely that passion, the impulsive nature, predominates in the one, and that reflection, the critical spirit, predominates in the third.

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The passionate temperament is a temperament where strong impulses for good or evil exist: where feeling is intense and where the need is felt of some great co-ordinating power to bind the affections together, and to give a directing force to the character. Some of the most lovable personalities in the world have been of this kind. Most of the saints in history, St Francis d'Assisi, St Augustine, have been men of tidal emotion, and their weaknesses, their lapses and the moral heights to which they climbed, testify to this.

To such natures religion, when it appeals, must appeal as some external authority. Faith must express itself in a ritual: belief crystallise into a dogma. Knowing the weaknesses of human nature, having gauged the cross-currents which deflect the will first this way and then that, conscious of the passion of inward effort to decide first hand in the great problems of life, they turn with a sigh of relief and aspiration towards some great church that has continued down the ages; or towards some great book that shall decide the questions that have bewildered and amazed them.

Obedience is one of the first duties they strive after. Those who trust to a Church rather than to a Book are Catholics; the Protestant turns to the Book as the external authority needed. In Newman's case, of course, it was "The Church" that appealed as an authority that quieted all questionings as the reputed medium of supernatural grace.

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With all his powerful intellect, with all his critical appreciation, he felt the necessity in his religious life for some external authority on which he could depend. Self-reliance in spiritual matters looked to him like puerile cock-sureness.

The perceptive temperament is the temperament of the artist pure and simple. On the religious side art is always pantheistic. Its aim, it has been said, is to read off the expressiveness of things. It has no need of dogma, for its feeling towards the infinite is one that loses much of its beauty and meaning if reduced to cold logic. It remains a feeling, an attitude; and although it suffers from the defects of all purely subjective moods, and cannot be readily communicated to others, yet it is a mistake to think that it is not strong because it has not wholly emerged out of feeling into concrete thought. To its perceptions, form, colour, sound, motion have a soul within them whose life and activity they represent: and even language, by flinging itself into the mould of rhythm and music, acquires beyond its logical significance a second meaning for the affections. The artist does not fly from a warring universe and find in some charmed circle in history or in literature a haven of refuge, a solvent for the discord—for the unseen to him is ever strong to show a divine beauty—while he seems to stand before a curtain only half opaque, watching the lights and shadows thrown on it from behind by the ceaseless play of infinite thought. He melts the barrier away that hides from mere sense and intellect,

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the formative idea, and his glance of sympathy changes them as the sunrise changes the grey landscape and discovers its latent glories.\*

The third temperament is the temperament of the scientific mind; that rejects dogma not because it holds it superfluous but because it accounts it mischievous. Clear intellectual comprehension, that is its ideal and its test. What cannot be verified by human experience is untrustworthy. "Science and her methods gave me a resting-place independent of authority and tradition."

What is abnormal is explained by extremists of this school in physiological terms: all transcendental states of piety are classified as morbid—St Paul was an epileptic; St Theresa a martyr to hysteria; Shelley's raptures were a matter of sensitive nerves, and Browning's optimism may be attributed to his sound digestion.

Temperament is explained in terms of medical diathesis, and although with the more moderate agnostics the cravings of man's religious feelings are allowed some attenuated outlet, everywhere Logic is paramount.

Now, if I am right in my assumption, you may agree or disagree with Newman's temperament, but you cannot impugn his sincerity for attaching this importance to the dogmatic principle. For him it was absolutely of the highest importance. When he spoke of the Godlessness in Nature, it was not because he wished to drive men into the Catholic faith by dis-

\* *Vide* MARTINEAU, "Distinctive Types of Christianity," and other essays, where he follows out a similar line of thought.



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paraging other possible sources of revelation, but because the world of Nature had no appeal for him as it had for Wordsworth and Shelley. There was nothing wavering about his Theism.

“The contemplation of God and nothing but it, is able fully to open and relieve the mind; to unlock, occupy and fix our affections. It is this feeling of simple and absolute confidence and communion which soothes and satisfies those to whom it is vouchsafed. We know that even our nearest friends enter into us but partially, and hold intercourse with us only at times, whereas the consciousness of a perfect and enduring presence, and it alone, keeps our heart open. If it be not bold to say it—He who is infinite alone can be its measure. He alone can answer to that mysterious assemblage of feelings and thoughts which it has within it.”

That may have been written by a fanatic: by a sceptic—no. The dogmatic principle which he asserts so passionately in his *Apologia* is worked out with brilliant elaboration in two books, *The Development of Christian Doctrine* (1845) and *A Grammar of Assent* (1870).

*The Development of Christian Doctrine*, it has been truly said, takes as its starting-point the incontestable principle that Christianity, like every historical institution, has passed through a process of development of growth in doctrine and custom, and was not given to the world in the beginning in a perfect form. He offers numbers of instances going to show that

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orthodox Protestantism is under a delusion when it supposes that all its doctrine and practices are taught in Scripture and are prescribed therein, or are to be directly deduced therefrom. It is impossible to remain in the mere letter of Scripture, because the necessities of interpretation, for instance, of such a phrase as "The Word became flesh" lead at once to a series of further questions.

Finally, in Scripture itself, the necessity of such a progressive development is distinctly indicated, for instance, in the parables of the "leaven" and the "mustard seed."\*

The historical use made of the evolutionary idea anticipates to some extent Spencer's work. There is much in the book of a highly debatable character, and I fail to see the force of Newman's argument that, in order to distinguish correct development from false, an infallible authority outside the development is required. To quote from the German theologian, Dr Pfeiderer: "If Christianity is as a whole a revelation, the results of its development must share the guarantee of its credentials." Surely Newman overlooked the fact that the alleged infallible authority is itself a product of the general development, and that it participates in its changes and is therefore subject, like every historical phenomenon, to the law of relativity. The infallibility of any authority is a question of historical evidence; it is not a theological problem, or only secondarily one.

\* Vide *Development of Theology* (OTTO PFLEIDERER).

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But criticism apart, Newman's essay is an extremely instructive one, raising many questions of practical interest, such as how far Christianity as taught to-day is the genuine outcome of primitive customs? how far our preservative additions, our doctrines and our glosses are corruptions? how far fairly derived?

In *A Grammar of Assent* Newman elaborated a principle he had learnt from Keble, that religious conviction rests on emotional, not on intellectual, grounds.

That further, these grounds cannot be theoretically proved, or logically justified, probability being converted into certainty by a voluntary assent.

The doctrine of probability is borrowed and developed from Butler, and Newman certainly has much to say that is stimulating and suggestive. Quite apart from its theological bearings there is a profound psychological truth in his contention that our opinions are so largely affected by instinctive prepossession, temperamental likes and dislikes, so little by logic; and that, estimating our views, these peculiarities of our mental constitution, which no arguments can alter, must be taken into consideration.

“I do not like thee, Dr Fell;  
The reason why I cannot tell.”

But often we try to give a reason, and it is most likely a sorry one, as the dislike of Dr Fell may arise from no defects in the doctor, but from some unaccountable repugnance in ourselves.

A and B write about cats. A is attracted towards them, B dislikes them. They make him shudder.

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If he tries to logically define his dislike he will bring forth arguments showing how selfish they are, etc., while the real reason is neglected.

Cleverly as Newman used the evolutionary idea, more value still attaches to his conception of unconscious thought,—or in the language of modern science, sub-conscious thought—in moulding human life.

What one finds lacking in Newman's philosophy is hopefulness and restfulness. One rises from reading his writings with the impression of a troubled mind, and it was this sensitiveness to the puny limitations of human knowledge, and to the moral and intellectual difficulties that beset the religious man, which made men like Huxley and Leslie Stephen look upon him as a sceptic at heart. I do not believe he was a sceptic: I believe that he was a man of deep and fervent piety, but with an excessive diffidence in interpreting that piety in terms of religious philosophy. One may agree fully with him that the constant failures and mistakes of our powers of analysis do not touch the truest springs of faith and trust. But his depreciation of rational grounds, coupled with his insistence on an external authority, does give opportunity, one must admit, for the enemy to smile.

He had a very powerful and subtle intellect, and it alarmed him. That seems to me one way of roughly summing up his attitude of mind. His intellect seemed to lead him into regions of thought which provided no consolation to the emotional side of his nature. He vindicated, and rightly, a place for

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the emotions in daily life and thought. But he went further: he held that our deepest convictions cannot find adequate intellectual symbols, mingled as they are with half-conscious aspirations, longings and "trailing clouds of glory" from other worlds. Here, too, I think we may go with him; our deepest feelings can never be satisfactorily translated into intellectual formulæ—rational arguments. But—and here some of us will, I think, join issue with him—he went further still and, for fear of starving the emotional cravings of his nature, he provided every manner of external assistance—whether of creed or of ritual—to keep alive the flame. It has been well said by Professor William James, "that to an imagination used to the perspectives of dignity and glory, the noble gospel scheme dear to the Protestant mind, the Protestant nature, seems to offer an almshouse for a palace." It is much like the patriotic sentiment of those brought up in ancient empires. How many emotions must be frustrated of their object when one gives up the titles of dignity, the crimson lights and blare of brass, the gold embroidery, the plumed trooper, the fear and trembling, and puts up with a president in a black coat, who shakes hands with you and comes, it may be, from a "home" upon a veldt and prairie with one sitting-room and a Bible on its centre table. It pauperises the monarchial imagination.\*

Catholicism, it has been well said, offers a much richer pasturage and shade to the fancy, is so indulgent

\* Vide *Varieties of Religious Experience* (JAMES).

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in its multifarious appeals to human nature, that Protestants will always show to Catholic eyes the almshouse physiognomy. To the Catholic the Protestant seems wanting in adaptability and in imagination; to the Protestant the Catholic seems to pander too much to the senses, and to be over-lax where truth is concerned.

Coleridge once said of a man that he never looked at Nature except through bits of stained glass. It might be said, I think, of Newman, that he rarely looked at life except through the cloister window. The window has very beautiful stained glass, with charm and power to soothe when the glare of the noonday sun is fierce. None knew better than Newman the weaknesses of human nature and the magical influence stained glass exercises upon the spiritual imagination of men and women.

For him, Emerson's adjuration to open the skylight of the soul to the breezes of heaven would be directly to court a sort of spiritual pneumonia. Well, the open-air cure is not, perhaps, for every constitution, and Newman knew how frail and sickly human nature often is. And although many of us may think that the open skylight makes for hardiness, yet our spiritual physicians are by no means of a mind on the matter. Each must find out for himself. Moreover, even if he do not care for all the spiritual drugs that Newman prescribes, there are aspects of his character and work that cannot but appeal to the mind and imagination of all thinking men.

## JAMES MARTINEAU

CERTAIN picturesque externals in the lives of Newman and Robertson \* have impressed themselves on the popular imagination. Maurice is known chiefly through his enthusiastic disciple, Kingsley. Yet he wielded an influence on English thought almost as penetrating as Newman and greater than Robertson.

There was no one man to interpret Martineau, though indirectly he has been an intellectual and spiritual influence upon the thought of the past century second to none.† His thoughts have been filtered through other minds; and his fervent ethical genius has impressed almost every thoughtful man or woman of culture.

The address that was presented to him on his eighty-third birthday gives more idea of the affection and respect which his genius commanded than columns of ordinary panegyric. This address was signed by the leading scholars and thinkers of Europe and America, without distinction of sect or party. The address, finally revised by Benjamin Jowett, concluded in these words:—

“ You have taught your generation that both in politics and religion there are truths above party,

\* Robertson of Brighton.

† Robertson's sermons owe considerably to Martineau's *Endeavour's after a Christian Life*.

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independent of contemporary opinion, and which cannot be overthrown, for their foundations are in the heart of man; you have shown that there may be an inward unity transcending the divisions of the Christian world, and that the charity and sympathy of Christians are not to be limited to those who bear the name of Christ; you have sought to harmonise the laws of the spiritual with the natural world, and to give to each their due place in human life; you have preached a Christianity of the spirit and not of the letter, which is inseparable from morality; you have spoken to us of a hope beyond this world; you have given rest to the minds of many. We admire the simple record of a long life passed in the strenuous fulfilment of duty, in preaching, in teaching the young of both sexes, in writing books of permanent value, a life which has never been distracted by controversy, and in which personal interests and ambition have never been allowed a place."

There is not a word of over-praise. Indeed, there is a simple reticence about the phrasing that must have gratified the recipient. His reply was characterised by that delicacy and modesty that always informed all his personal references. "To be held of any account by the *élite* of those to whom I have habitually looked up, including representatives from the foremost ranks of literature, science, philosophy, religion and personal character is an honour simply mysterious to me. To such an escort down the declining path of life what can an old man do but



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throw out a few faltering words of thanks and love and reverence."

Some years before this, previous to the publication of Martineau's most important contribution to philosophical thought, Mr Gladstone had remarked of him, "He is the greatest thinker of our age." It is clear we are dealing with a personality of no mean power, yet with certain qualities of temperament which have militated against such a wide recognition of his genius as might have been thought inevitable.

Turning to our classification of temperament, we find, in the case of Dr Martineau, a most unusual blend of the perceptive—the artistic temperament, and the scientific—the critical temperament. The perceptive temperament dominated, and to its influence may be attributed Martineau's ready response to the beauty of the world of nature, the attractions of the fine arts, the compelling power of the emotional life. It may be traced in his growing literary style, in the mystical piety of his devotional writings, in that charming old-world courtesy and sweetness of manner.

It was the first thing that struck the listener who had the privilege to hear Dr Martineau discourse on some congenial subject. In the written word "that severe, that earnest air," to quote Matthew Arnold's well-known line, gave an austere asceticism to his thought more apparent than real. But when face to face with him a wonderful sweetness of disposition and gentleness of manner disarmed his profound ethical idealism of any harshness or narrowness.

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Yet there was another side to his nature. With the heart of a mediæval saint, the disposition of a St Francis, he had the keen, swift intellect of a modern scientist, the dialectic ability of a Huxley. He reminded one of those old ecclesiastics who were fully girt up for battle beneath their flowing robes, and in the presence of an enemy could wield a sword with the dexterity of the professional soldier.

One must never forget that he was brought up to be a civil engineer, and had a thorough training in mathematics, physics and the mechanical sciences generally.

He had not Huxley's almost boyish love of a tussle, and mere controversy was ever distasteful to him.

But when roused by unjust attack, or when he saw some able thinker like Spencer or Tyndall undermining the Christian faith, there was no one more ready to do battle, and no one more able to defend his own position.

It is, I think, universally recognised by the ablest materialists and agnostics that Martineau was their most dangerous opponent. I can recall no thinker who has done more *intellectually* to justify religious faith and bring it into line with the latest discoveries of science than the great Unitarian thinker who so lately passed away.

In discussing the outlook of Martineau I wish to treat him first as a critic, where the scientific side of the man is most clearly exhibited. Secondly, I wish to treat of him as a preacher, and here the perceptive, the Greek element in his nature, is best

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appreciated. Finally, I would like to touch upon his work as a teacher, where the scientific and perceptive sides meet and mingle. Before doing so it may be interesting to note some personal characteristics which, trivial as they may seem, are not without their bearing upon the thinker.

In the early nineties Martineau's slight, active figure could frequently be seen threading silently the London streets and stopping to look into some favourite book shop. Remembering that he was then over eighty, his physical activity was remarkable. He belonged indeed to the race of great old men who defy the ravages of Time.

He was a magnificent walker, and in his eightieth year thought nothing of a twenty-mile ramble. There is a story of an American visiting him in his Scottish home. One morning there arose a question of diversion: should they walk or drive? Something was said of a walk, and Dr Martineau, pointing to a mountain eleven miles away, proposed a walk thither and return. The American looked at the mountain and gave it in favour of a drive. In his ninetieth year he had to be seriously cautioned for alighting from an omnibus in motion; and he complained, as if it were something extraordinary, that he was not able to run upstairs as he was wont to do.

Truly a wonderful vitality, in comparison with which Mr Gladstone's tree-chopping seems child's play.

Although a preacher for forty-two years, and a college professor for forty-five, there was nothing

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professorial or academic in his manner. He had a personal charm, a graciousness which attracted young men to him very speedily. There was nothing of the professional cleric or of the dominie about him. He had a delicate sense of humour, and his general conversation was bright and attractive. Intimately in touch with the politics, music and painting of the day, he would treat of these with an ease and pleasant allusiveness very attractive to listen to. He was fond of a good story and would tell it with a special zest if against himself, and no one was quicker to make fun of the pomposity and peculiarities of learned professors. He told me once about a certain German Professor X, who declared oracularly that no one could understand Hegel but himself. Unfortunately, added Martineau, drily, nobody could understand Professor X.

Yet whether talking to one in his musical voice about some great problem in philosophy or ethics, or touching lightly upon some topic of the day, one was always conscious of a great and noble soul, and a deeply serious mind.

As head for many years of the most influential theological college in the country, and as co-editor of a critical review of considerable brilliance, the critical and analytical powers of Martineau were afforded unusual scope for their display.

There has probably never been any writer at once so able and so fair-minded in the realms of philosophy and kindred subjects. "I could never be moved,"

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he declared, "to give an account of a book by pure antipathy any more than by monotonous assent. The whole interest of literary intercourse, like that of all quickening friendship, is conditional on crossing veins of likeness and unlikeness in thought and character, deepening the zest and sympathy by the need and the possibility of more. And true criticism seems to me the recorded struggle of the reader's mind into closer relations with an author whose intermittent bursts, helpful as they are, still do not enable him clearly to see his way."

These sentences should be written in letters of gold, and hung up as illuminated texts in the study of every literary man. For they go to the very root of all large-minded criticism. The critic is not a mere caviller, a word splitter; he is an interpreter. In bringing the would-be criticiser into contact with the writer he will necessarily display points of divergence from his own cast of mind; but his main object is to present the subject criticised clearly and fairly before the reader, and thus enable him to judge for himself.

And with Martineau as with all first-rate critics, the feature that detaches itself for special admiration is not the character of the criticism—admirable as that may be—but the method of the critic.

Let us consider a few of these critiques.

Here is a passage or so from a study of John Henry Newman. "Looking back on the whole influence of Dr Newman's personality and writings we see in it a great preponderance of good. A sense of the sanctity

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of common duties and self-denials, of the grandeur and power of historical communion and church life, of the true place of beauty and art in worship, has deeply penetrated into the newer religion of England. For the re-union of religious and moral ends, for the reconciliation of the near and temporal, many a heart owes a debt of unspeakable gratitude to the literature of the Oxford school. The one grand sin which we must set off against these merits is a certain want of unconditional and ultimate trust in their own principles. Their system has too often the appearance of being constructed on purpose as a refuge from doubts they dare not face. Their intellectual men have been fond of playing with fire and flinging about brilliant scepticisms, eating into the very heart of life, for the chance of inducing flight into their protecting fold. "To obey," they say, "is easier than to believe;" so we will begin from the conscience that we may end with assurance. Good; but see that you obey out of the belief you have, instead of with a view to a belief which you have not. Conscience has a right to you through and through and must be served without terms, and vainly do you mount her sacred steps, on knees of painful penance, if the thought of your heart be to escape from the outer exposures and threatening skies of doubt into the shelter of a ready temple and the sympathy of a mighty throng. The deepest form of scepticism is seen in the mind which is in haste to believe; which resolves by some violent spring to make an end of darkness, whether the light

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attained be God's or not. Something of this unfaith lurks in the spirit of the new Catholic party. 'They recognise,' remarks Martineau in one of his flashes of sarcasm, 'the ambassadorial credentials of conscience, and show you in its casket of secrets the very signet of the King of Kings; on opening the despatch box you find they have stuffed in all the creeds.' "

" Now I have quoted these passages of mingled censure and appreciation because they afford a clear-cut picture of Martineau's own habits of mind—its quickness to detect anything approaching intellectual jugglery, its sensitiveness to all that was lovable or admirable. Newman and Martineau stand at opposite poles of thought—the one the most brilliant defender of dogma this age has ever seen; the other the most uncompromising critic of a dogmatic system. Yet, apart from Catholic apologists, such as Mr Wilfrid Ward or Mr W. S. Lilly, one would not find a more sympathetic interpretation of Newman's personality.

The service done by such a writer as Martineau then is of great service to all earnest students of psychology. In his mingled praise and blame we get a rational presentment of a man. There is no attack on the Catholic theology here. That is a matter for the theological student. There is, however, an attack on Newman's *method*—his way of persuading men to religion—which is open to anyone to criticise.

One other illustration of Martineau's critical ability I select from his remarks on Carlyle. After some passages warmly praising the moral fervour of

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*Sartor Resartus*, he analyses the "hero-worship" tendency. "We know," he says, "that where he discovers, as in Mirabeau, great force of mind, he is ready to plead this as a bar of all objections against character, and to insist that in spite of appearances, such brightness of life must carry with it soundness of conscience. But will he turn the problem round and abide by it still? When he finds deep hid in the retreats of private life a goodness eminent and saintly, a moral clearness and force, great in their way as Mirabeau's keen-sightedness, will he accept the sign in evidence of mighty intellect? Will he say that, notwithstanding the meek and homely look, high genius must assuredly be there? For him as for many gifted and ungifted men, the force which will not be stopped by any restraint on its way to great achievement, the genius which claims to be its own law and will confess nothing diviner than itself, have an irresistible fascination. His eye, overlooking the landscape of humanity, always runs up to the brilliant peaks of power, not indeed without a glance of love and pity into many a retreat of quiet goodness that lies beneath their shelter; but should the sudden lightning or the seasonal melting of the world's ice-barriers bring down a ruin on that green and feeble life, his voice, after one faint cry of pathos, joins in with the thunder and shouts with the triumph of the avalanche. Ever watching the strife of the great forces of the universe, he no doubt sides on the whole against the Titans with the gods; but if the Titans



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make a happy fling and send home a mountain or two to the very beard of Zeus, he gets delighted with the game on any terms and cries ' Bravo! ' " \*

Surely an admirable piece of criticism on certain aspects of Carlyle's teaching.

For sheer intellectual power the theological essays of Martineau stand, however, easily first. Many years ago an uncompromising materialist observed, " Dr Martineau is the most formidable opponent we have; " and no one can read his brilliant and closely-reasoned attack upon the agnostic position of Tyndall without admiration for the dialectical power displayed.

As a rule, controversies between theologians and scientists make poor reading. The scientist has so much the better of it, so far as argument goes. With all his ability and dexterity Mr Gladstone fared badly in his famous controversy in the pages of the *Nineteenth Century* with Huxley.

On quite another footing were the dialectic duels between Martineau and Tyndall, and Martineau and Spencer.

Here was a case of Greek meeting Greek. And a prettier logical display of fencing it would be hard to find. Martineau was an ideal controversialist. He never lost his temper; but when very provoked would, under cover of the most polished courtesies of speech, send in a few rapier-like lunges that caused his opponent to wince.

One recalls Izaak Walton's instruction for the use

\* *Essays, Reviews and Addresses*, Vol. I.

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of the frog : " Put your hook through his mouth and out at his gills, and in so doing use him as though you loved him."

Martineau certainly provoked his opponents very often in the gentlest, kindest, but most unmistakable fashion. To read his devotional writings you would have rated him a poet with much of the dreamy mystic in his composition. To read his criticisms you would think him a physicist with a taste for theology.

Some years ago a friend, wishing to make a compilation of extracts from his works, wrote to him for permission. In his reply he said, " Messrs Longmans recently applied to me for permission to issue just such a compilation of extracts from my books as you suggest. I declined it, from long and indeed constant experience of utter disappointment with all anthologies of this kind formed by lifting out of their context thoughts which in their place come home with force to the reader. When the impression strikes him he naturally refers it to the passage under his eye at the moment and is not aware how dependent it is upon the preparation with which he is brought up to it by the preceding course of thought and tone of feeling. Cut this away, the very same sentiment, flung upon him as a sudden fragment, will have no penetrating power to stir him from within, but only sticks upon his memory, perhaps by one sharp point of expression. I do not deny that there are writers of great depth and wisdom who, themselves thinking in epigrams, admit without injury of being thus taken

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piecemeal; Carlyle sometimes, Emerson often. But these intuitional and poetic natures are exceptional. And level writers, dependent not on inspired glimpses, but on continuous and coherently linked thought, are wronged when they are pulled to pieces and made to play the prophet instead of the pleader. As my main work of life has been didactic, conformed to the methods and requirements of logic, ethics and philosophy, my literary habit has been moulded to the *pedestris oratio* and does not rise into the detached flights required by the compiler of oracles."

There is much truth in this characteristically modest letter, and one realises, directly an attempt is made to illustrate Martineau's excellences as a writer, how often they suffer by being wrested from their context. Still, they do give a suggestion as to the tone of his thought, and, couched in his eloquent diction, carry with them no little power.

In passing from Martineau the critic to Martineau the preacher we are conscious of a side of his character which would have surprised us much had we not some ground plan of his temperament to guide us. But the close observer will have noted behind the fine gauze-work of his dialectic a white flame of powerful emotion, and it is a significant characteristic of the man that in the pulpit he should drop the weapons of the controversialist and don the robes of the mystic.

His sermons are devotional poems, not trapped as so many are with a cumbersome theology; indeed, it would be hard to say to what theological school he

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belonged, breathing at one moment the spiritual fervour and beauty of Catholic piety, at the next the clear intellectual individualism of Protestant thought.

If they have any fault it is an undue compression of thought, and, however adapted for leisurely reading in the study, must have demanded the closest attention to the sermons when spoken in Liverpool or London. He was not a great preacher in the same way as were Newman and Robertson. His literary style is too heavily charged with ornament to give it that instantaneous power which the lucid periods of Newman invariably possessed. There was a lack of illustration and an avoidance of current problems which made them less attractive to the ordinary listener than the vigorous eloquence of Robertson. None the less even when delivered—as many have testified—the sermons carried with them a singular charm and power.

The personality of the speaker with his tall spare figure, ascetic face and fine luminous eyes; the utter absence of ostentation; the musical voice—these things challenged immediate attention. If at the time the full beauty of the thoughts did not reach home they remained in the mind and gradually disclosed themselves, and the spirit of devotional simplicity, the atmosphere of high endeavour that they breathed, exercised an influence that fascinated even those to whom his theology was but a pretty dream.

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Many a notable preacher has turned for meditative inspiration to those volumes of homily entitled *Endeavours after a Christian Life* and *Hours of Thought*.

A certain stern melancholy broods over his writings, at times perhaps touching upon austerity, which shows his full appreciation of the darker problems of life, and the puzzles which no theologian, however able, can unravel. Not for an instant did it shake his faith; never did it move him to take shelter behind any dogmatic creed or Church; but it gave added emphasis to his ethical teaching, to his insistence upon our following "the gleam."

With all his keen admiration of intellectual power and poetic genius he never forgets this, as witness the following passage from one of his sermons :—

"It becomes a favourite maxim that genius is its own law, and is appointed to legislate for others rather than to be under rule itself. The maxim is the more seductive because there is an important sense in which it is really true. In relation to its own special subject—be it science or song—it is the attribute and necessity of genius to burst the limits of earlier models, and create a type of new excellence to which the canons of established criticisms do not apply. When a Shakespeare has lived, the drama can no longer be judged by the example of Sophocles and the rules of Aristotle. To try the natural history of an Owen or a Darwin by the measures of Linnæus, and the music of Beethoven and Mendelssohn by the

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practice of Handel, would be a mere tenacious pedantry.

“ It is from the production of higher minds that we rise to higher rules and leave the former bounds behind. Nor is our moral and spiritual life any exception to this principle. If ever we seize a purer ideal, or are lifted into sublimer worship, it is because some soul of deeper insight and holier aspiration has shown us the way, has charged our vision and opened to us a better than our best. But this is no escape into lawlessness; it is an emergence from lower in order to serve a higher law, a law not arbitrarily made by the self-will of genius, but actually formed and reverently followed in the reality of things. All honour to these legislators of our humanity in the several fields of their supremacy. But turn them not from a blessing into a curse by extending your homage to their incapacities and your indulgence to their sins. That Bacon laid out the groundwork of all our science makes no better of his meanness; that Newton worked out the lunar theory does not improve his peevishness; that Byron wrote in strains of melody and pathos makes sadder than before his want of purity and reverence of mind.

“ Such infinity belongs not to their insight but to their blindness. . . . Precisely in proportion as they yield to it is the range of their genius lowered. . . . Within his special range we may freely own the title of the man of genius to be a law to himself and to us, seeing that *these* our admitted rules are not large

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enough to cover the whole compass and achievements of his faculty. But this, far from being a negation of law or a personal immunity from it, simply identifies him with its higher revelation, and only says that he will be judged by a standard severer and sublimer than our own. That he has the glorious bondage laid upon him of a perfection beyond the limits of other's vision."

This passage is characteristic of Martineau's disposition. Larger mental powers connote for him necessarily a more penetrating moral insight; lapses therefore from right conduct are viewed by him with graver disapprobation than in the case of the average individual. And thus, in his view, the great man is the man with the wider vision, the firmer grasp on "the things that are unseen." This view, however, shuts out of sight the special temptations of the artistic temperament. It ignores the kinship between genius and insanity.

Is Martineau's picture altogether psychologically true? Is it not a fact that the finer appreciation of poetic beauty is gained at the expense of the physical organisation? And this introduces a nervous instability that intensifies the power of certain temptations.

The same highly-strung nervous system that expresses itself in lyrical raptures may find an unfortunate outlet in irritable moods or gusts of passion. To say that genius always excuses these is, one may argue with Martineau, mischievous; the tendency to

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idealise the very weaknesses of men of genius deserves nothing but discouragement. Yet surely there are occasions when allowances may be made for them—and not only for them but for all men. One good effect of the scientific spirit has been to introduce a larger charity in our moral judgments. A man should be judged, surely, by the strength of his temptations rather than by the brilliance of his faculties; and the strength of his temptation is a matter of temperament, of organisation. Questions of heredity, environment and education must be taken into account in determining these approximately, for of course we can only determine them approximately.

Otherwise, you might as well construe brilliancy of complexion as a test of health, forgetting that the hectic flush of the consumptive is a sign of a feeble vitality. Greater intellectual foresight does not imply greater moral insight.

The occasional note of austerity in Martineau's judgments is due, probably, to his intense individualism. His own temperament presented an unusually happy balance of tendencies; the scientific kept in check the æsthetic, the æsthetic softened the scientific. No undue preponderance showed itself of any faculty. A better instance of *mens sana in corpore sano* it would have been hard to find, and he had, like all thoroughly healthy men, a kind of impatience of men and women of less healthy organisation. He looked upon morbid temperaments with



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a certain chill compassion not unmixed with a faint contempt. Perhaps modern opinion has swung over much to other extreme, and the austerity and severity of Martineau's moral judgments may supply a useful corrective. But the occasional severity of his moral judgments need some modification.

To turn now to Martineau the philosopher.

"No one," remarks Mr Carpenter most justly,\* "can fail to see that Martineau's interpretation of the world and life is the issue of exalted character. Both ethics and metaphysics rest for him on the incidents of his inner history, and this supplies the clue to the whole future of his thought." Two elements in his education helped to shape all his future thought. "In the first place he had a mechanical training; he was familiarised with conceptions of matter and motion; he learned to take a scientific view of the world, and to explain its elementary relations mathematically as a part of necessary truth. To this habit of mind he remained faithful to his latest years, and this enabled him to distinguish himself so brilliantly in his dialectic warfare with scientists of the agnostic school.

"In the second place he was taught to live under a persistently high moral tension." A happy temperament he had assuredly; but men similarly blessed do not often use natural graces of mind and spirit so finely as did James Martineau. His life reads like the life of a mediæval saint, and the splendour of his intellect

\* *James Martineau*, by Professor ESTLIN CARPENTER.

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was ever made to subserve the demands of his moral nature.

He possessed the humility and simplicity characteristic of all very great souls.

One can, of course, only notice certain broad features of Martineau's philosophy. To do more would involve a consideration of theological doctrines beyond the scope of these papers. Our interest in religious philosophy is the interest of the psychologist, not of any theological school, and the difference between the Theist and the Agnostic is a difference of temperament rather than opinion.

*Firstly*, The strong individualism of Martineau's philosophy.

*Secondly*, The special quality of its optimism.

*Firstly*, its individualism.

In their religious philosophy both Newman and Martineau start from the same position—that in the sense of obligation or authority exercised by conscience we find the basis for our belief in a spiritual world. In Newman's case, however, this sense of conscience is too faint to be relied upon absolutely, it needs confirmation. The Being of God, he admits, is as certain to him as the certainty of his own existence. And yet his intellect remains dissatisfied with the mere assurance of God, or from arguments drawn from the general facts of human society and the course of history. And he sees in the vast accumulation of dogma and ritual provided by the Catholic Church a

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solution for his difficulties. Distrusting the unaided authority of his own mind he leans for support on this infallible authority of the Church.

It is here that Martineau parts company with him. The conscience and intellect of man, he asserts, give the only reliable authority. Martineau sees in history the continual struggle between truth and error; the treasure is there, but it is in "earthen vessels," and he can see no literature nor institution into which errors both intellectual and moral have not crept.

There is no uncertainty in his verdict upon popular religion. "A conclusion is forced upon me on which I cannot dwell without pain and dismay, *i.e.*, that Christianity as defined or understood in all the churches which formulate it has been mainly evolved from what is transient and perishable in its sources; from what is unhistorical in its traditions, mythological in its traditions, and misapprehended in the oracles of its prophets. From the fable of Eden to the imagination of the last trumpet, the whole story of the divine order of the world is dislocated and deformed. The spreading alienation of the intellectual classes of European society from Christendom and the detention of the rest in their spiritual culture at a level not much above that of the Salvation Army, are social phenomena which ought to bring home a very solemn appeal to the conscience of stationary churches.

"For their long arrear of debt to the intelligence of mankind they adroitly seek to make amends by

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elaborate beauty of ritual art. The apology soothes for a time, but it will not last for ever."

These be bold words, and might have been spoken by a Spencer or Huxley. But a few passages later we find this, the reverse of Spencerean :—

"In the very constitution of the human soul there is provision for an immediate apprehension of God. But in the transient lights and shades of conscience we pass on and 'know not who it is,' and not till we see in another the victory that shames our own defeat and are caught up by enthusiasm for some realised heroism or sanctity do the authority of right and the beauty of holiness come home to us as an appeal literally divine. The train of the conspicuously righteous in their several degrees are for us the real angels that pass to and fro on the ladder that reaches from earth to heaven. And if Jesus of Nazareth, in virtue of the characteristics of His spirit, holds the place of Prince of Saints and perfects the conditions of the pure religious life, He thereby reveals the highest possibilities of the human soul and their dependence on habitual communion between man and God."

Here then we have a free critical spirit and a devotional spirit in juxtaposition. This is not the place for attempting to show how Martineau aims at justifying his position on intellectual grounds. I simply have to record the nature of his belief; to analyse the process by which he comes to his decision is obviously foreign to our purpose.

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With Martineau, therefore, authority is internal; with Newman external. It is a mistake to urge, as do certain sympathetic critics, *i.e.*, Dr Mellone, that Martineau rejects entirely dogmatic systems. He does not do so. He realises that in the history of thought even the most rigid and uncompromising dogmas have contained germs of truth which have given them vitality. What he denies is their infallible authority. At the same time he imposes obviously upon the individual a far weightier responsibility than does Newman. We are not all so clear-sighted and fine-minded as Martineau. Some are dwellers in the valley where mists and vapours sweep across the soul, obscuring the light that is never absent from the sun-flushed altitude of his mind, and one can understand why Catholicism or popular Protestantism found a far readier response with the majority of men than the Unitarian faith of Martineau.

This brings me to the central point of Martineau's individualism—his imperative sense of moral obligation.

It would be impossible with the space at my disposal to follow Martineau into the intricacies of his elaborate and powerful plea for moral intuition as opposed to the prudential hypothesis of Bentham, Mill and Herbert Spencer. I will try and state shortly the points at issue, for they lie at the very root of Martineau's philosophy. "Conscience," urges Spencer, in effect, "is a reflection of prudence. Man ever acts with

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reference to ends which must always be in some form his pleasure, happiness, welfare." Again, "Happiness," exclaims John Stuart Mill, "is the sole end of human action and the promotion of it the test by which to judge all human conduct. Those who desire virtue for its own sake, desire it either because the consciousness of it is a pleasure, or because the consciousness of being without it is a pain, or for both reasons united."

This philosophy is a highly persuasive one, and has much to support it. Against this view Martineau contends there are two criteria of judgment—prudence and conscience. Prudence is our regulative principle in deciding upon the utilities of conduct; conscience our light and guide in settling between conflicting motives. The former appoints for our welfare, the latter for our character. Take an illustration of the difference. Shall I buy a piece of land? This question I answer rightly enough by reference to my circumstances and tastes. Shall I right a wrong? Here I am called to another judgment. Not, Is a certain course wiser? but, Is a certain course better? The pleasure that ensues from a right action is the fruit of our choice, not its incentive. But if pleasure be the end of action, how explain acts of heroism and self-sacrifice or urge them on others? Because, says the utilitarian, the happiness of the greatest number is what we should aim at. But *why* should a man incur some privation when it conflicts with the only good at whose disposal you place him? By what

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persuasion are you to move him to throw away his all? Either you must tell him that the high consciousness condensed into an hour of self-immolation all the possibilities he foregoes—in which case you bid him consult for himself under pretence of martyrdom for others—or else you must speak to him in quite another tone; must remind him that when he knows the true, when he sees the just, when he is haunted by the appeal for mercy, a constraint which he cannot question is put upon him to be their witness, however long their dolorous way, however agonising their Calvary. And, speaking thus, you altogether change your voice, and from casting up the account-book of greater happiness are caught and carried away into the hymn of all the prophets.\*

Seeing the unsatisfactory character of the old utilitarianism, Herbert Spencer has explained this intuition that bids us sacrifice ourselves for others, as an inheritance transmitted from the habits of our forefathers, and formed in them by slow accumulation of personal experiments. Certainly, admits Martineau, through the evolutionary process the right becomes clearer and more dominating; but an impulse originally selfish or calculated can never evolve into one that is unselfish. The constraint of society, you urge, originates the intuition. Transport yourselves to the Diet of Worms, and to whom shall we look for the purer moral light? Not to the Emperor and the vast concourse of princes and nobles

\* *Seat of Authority in Religion.*

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and Church dignitaries, but to the one defiant hero there.

I have indicated the line of thought to be found in Martineau's writing, from his *Types of Ethical Theory*, *A Study of Religion*, and *A Seat of Authority in Religion*, each of them rich in eloquent exposition and searching criticism.

To turn in conclusion to the colour of Martineau's philosophy.

That it is not pessimistic is, I think, apparent. But in terming it optimistic some qualification is necessary.

No student of Martineau's writings can resist the feeling that a certain melancholy underlies them; it might have been seen indeed in the pensive wistfulness of his fine brow; it haunts his devotional books and dominates his ethical teaching. Some—as R. H. Hutton—have traced it to his “attenuated” Christian faith. They think they can discern it in the conflict between his scientific tendencies and fervent piety.

This theological explanation does not seem to me quite satisfactory, for something of the same melancholy can be traced in the personality and writings of both Newman and Maurice. Is it not due rather to a certain Puritan element, a distinctive lack of joyfulness—inseparable, perhaps, from men whose vocation it is to be “voices,” crying in the wilderness?

A hardness of emotion, outside the range of religious experience, tended—I will not say to defective



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sympathies, but—to a want of flexibility in the sympathies.

In Maurice's case it was more an inability to adjust himself to the lighter amenities of life; a certain shyness and reserve. Martineau, however, if endowed with finer powers of adjustment to the ordinary duties and pleasures of everyday life, was by nature more of the scholar and recluse than Maurice, and less actively interested than he in social politics. With Maurice—the community; with Martineau—the individual.

Although Martineau's interests were wider than those of Wordsworth, yet there was in his nature the same stern, meditative rapture. Like Wordsworth's Michael,—

“ His mind was keen,  
Intense and frugal ; apt for all affairs,  
And watchful more than ordinary men.”

Deeply as he loved mystics like Tauler and Pascal, there was more of the logician than the mystic in his own habits of thought. Despite his sensitive response to the influences of the arts, he seemed to be always posting moral sentries at each emotional outlet of the soul, and regarded perhaps with too grudging an eye the ebb and flow of ordinary desires and regrets. But his was a great and beautiful soul. For fearless candour, intellectual foresight and moral insight, our age has seen no finer spirit than James Martineau.



# THE SCIENTIST

“ It may be that the gulfs will wash us down ;  
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,  
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew ! ”

TENNYSON.

## THOMAS HENRY HUXLEY

To mention "Huxley" to the orthodox theologian in the eighties of the last century was like the proverbial red rag to the bull, and it must be added that the suggestion of theology upon the redoubtable scientist had a similarly exciting effect. Pious parents kept a stern eye upon the books brought into the house by omnivorous-reading youth, for fear lest one of his pernicious volumes should have strayed in and be disseminating poison to the household.

When Huxley was appointed one of the scientific lecturers at Edinburgh University, I have been told the "verra guid" folk of the city were transported with rage and terror.

Why heterodoxy should incapacitate a man from teaching physiology is not perhaps apparent to our more hardened minds; but in those days there never was such a "bold, bad man" as Thomas Henry Huxley. He was the Mephistopheles of the evangelical home and occupied a position similar to Lord Byron in the earlier years of the century.

He had adopted Darwin's theories, and pressed them into notice with polemical vigour in much the same way as Kingsley had treated Maurice. The result, however, was more sensational, as it seemed

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little other than a determined attack upon the foundations of the Christian faith.

There is little doubt that Huxley was fond of a fight. He had a fine, lucid, literary style, a natural aptitude for dialectics, and an impatience with the cautious peradventures and hair-splitting logic dear to many theologians.

But the popular impression of him gained, say by reading his articles in the *Nineteenth Century* and watching him try a fall with Gladstone or Dr Wace, needs to be corrected by the personal testimony of those well acquainted with him.

In appearance, it has been said, he was above the middle height, the white hair without parting was brushed straight back, the lips firm and slightly compressed; he had a mobile expression and (what the current photographs do not represent) the eyes full of fire were rather deep set beneath bushy eyebrows, with a look of keenest interest in all around him, often of great trustfulness.

In his manner and in his appearance there were marked distinction and dignity. The general impression left by his face was one of intellectual force and activity rather than of scorn.

Tennyson and Newman, an intimate friend once observed, always suggested more than they said. There was an unspoken residuum behind their speech which, as Wordsworth said on one occasion of the peak of a Swiss mountain hidden behind the low clouds, "You *felt* to be there though you could not see it."

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Huxley, on the contrary, finished his thoughts completely and expressed them with the utmost precision. There was not the ruggedness and the gaps which marked Tennyson's speech, nor the pause, the reserve, the obvious consciousness of suggestion on subjects too wide and intricate for full expression which one felt with Newman.

The symmetry and finish of Huxley's utterances were so great that one could not bring one's self to interrupt him, even when this completeness of form seemed to be possible only through ignoring for the moment much that should not be ignored. No doubt the deafness, which increased with later years, made his friends yet more ready rather to listen than to talk; but the quickness of his perceptions was so great that dialogue was, in its place, a matter of no great difficulty. If he heard even a word or two he had the clue to the rest and seldom failed to follow it successfully.

The form of his conversation, as one might have surmised, was dialectical rather than suggestive or meditative. He was very positive in his conclusions, not with the forced partisanship of a special pleader, but with the lucid conviction of a man whose mind was fully made up. He was like a lawyer who is thoroughly convinced of the justice of his contention, and "That is my case, my Lord," would have come naturally at the end of his expositions.\* Yet he was not, as some have imagined, intolerant or unfair in

\* Vide *Problems and Persons* (WILFRID WARD).

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debate, whether in private converse or in public. Mr Wilfrid Ward, who, as a fervent disciple of Newman, can certainly not be accused of bias in this matter, has asserted that, so far as his own experience went, the intellectual pleasure he seemed to find in letting each side say its say and do its best prevented the characteristics of the partisan from marring intercourse.

The influence of the Metaphysical Society upon Huxley's attitude towards theologians was important.

This remarkable society—remarkable inasmuch as it included the greatest thinkers of the time—was founded in 1869. The years immediately preceding its formation had, it is said, probably stamped deep upon Huxley's mind a sense of unjust treatment at the hands of professional ecclesiastics. The advocate of Darwinism, and the "higher criticism" of the Scriptures—and Huxley was in both ranks—had been for years treated simply as the enemies of religion. The distinctions familiar to all of us now, and the admission on all sides of a measure of truth in both phases of speculation, were little thought of in the sixties. *The Origin of Species* had appeared in 1859, and Colenso had raised the Scripture question about the same time—1859 to 1869 had been for Huxley years of war—and with his very direct and practical mind he saw in the theological protests of the hour nothing but a thoroughly unjust persecution of himself and his friends for researches undertaken in the interests of truth. The ecclesiastical "obstructives,"



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who condemned him without attending to his arguments, remained in his mind for a long time as absolute types of bigotry.\*

The Metaphysical Society did much to bring about a different state of feeling. It originated in a conversation between Mr James Knowles, editor of the *Nineteenth Century*, and some friends, including Tennyson. Tennyson suggested the formation of a society, the main object of which should be the submitting to searching criticism the intellectual foundations of the spreading agnosticism. "Something must be done," he said, in his abrupt, emphatic manner, "to put down these Agnostics." At first it was proposed to confine the membership to thinkers of a Theistic stamp. Well-known men were sounded as to their willingness to join, among them Dr Martineau. It was characteristic of Martineau's fearlessness that he declined to join a society so constituted.

"I feel," he wrote, "the deepest interest in these problems, and for the equal chance of gaining and giving light would gladly join in discussing them with Gnostics and Agnostics alike; but a society of Gnostics to put down Agnostics I cannot approve and would not join."

The scheme was accordingly altered to meet Martineau's wishes, and able Agnostics like Professor Tyndall and Huxley were invited and readily assented. That able Catholic, Dr W. G. Ward (father of Mr

\* *Vide Problems and Persons* (WILFRID WARD). *W. G. Ward and the Oxford Movement* (WILFRID WARD).

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Wilfrid Ward) took an active part in inducing people to join, and the society could boast of the most remarkable list of names ever met with in a single body. Of statesmen there were Mr Gladstone, Lord Selborne and the Duke of Argyll; prominent Churchmen such as Dean Stanley and F. D. Maurice; Unitarians such as Martineau; Agnostic men of science like Tyndall and Huxley; Agnostic men of letters as Mr John Morley and Leslie Stephen. For the rest, poets and journalists and lawyers of every shade of belief, such as Tennyson, Browning, Sir James Stephen, Sir Frederick Pollock, J. A. Froude, R. H. Hutton, Mark Pattison, Ruskin, Henry Sidgwick, Sir William Gull, Dr Andrew Clark.

The first meeting took place at Willis's Rooms, 21st of April 1869; but subsequently the Grosvenor Hotel was chosen as the habitual field of encounter. A good deal of anxiety was felt at first lest some of the startling subjects of debate might, through the medium of the hotel waiters, find their way to the zealots of Exeter Hall. The fear was however allayed when a member on arriving at the hotel was thus greeted by the porter, "A member of the *Madrigal* Society, sir, I suppose?" Possibly the attendants observed the amount of harmony that prevailed; or was the porter a bit of a wag? Among the various accounts of the proceedings and the impressions of the members the most striking has been furnished by Mr Hutton.

The following passages occur in an article contri-

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buted to the *Nineteenth Century* by Mr R. H. Hutton:—

“At the meeting of the Metaphysical Society which was held on the 10th December 1872,” he writes, “Dr Ward was to have read a paper on the question, ‘Can Experience prove the Uniformity of Nature?’ *Middlemarch* had been completed and published a few days previously. The Claimant was still starring it in the provinces in the interval between his first trial and his second. Thus the dinner itself was lively, though several of the more distinguished members did not enter till the hour for reading the paper had arrived. One might have heard Professor Huxley flashing out a sceptical defence of the use of the Bible in Board Schools at one end of the table, Mr Fitzjames Stephen’s deep bass remarks on the Claimant’s adroit use of his committal for perjury at another, and an eager discussion of the various merits of Lydgate and Rosamund at a third. Father Dalgairns, one of Dr Newman’s immediate followers, who left the English Church and entered the Oratory of St Philip Neri with him, a man of singular sweetness and openness of character, with something of a French type of playfulness in his expression, discoursed to me eloquently on the noble ethical character of George Eliot’s novels, and the penetrating disbelief in all but human excellence by which they are pervaded. And as I listened to this eloquent exposition with one ear, the sound of Professor Tyndall’s Irish voice descanting on the proposal for a ‘prayer-gauge’ which had lately

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been made in the *Contemporary Review* by testing the efficacy of prayer on a selected hospital ward, captivated the other. Everything alike spoke of the extraordinary fermentations of opinion in the society around us. Moral and intellectual yeast was as hard at work in the men who met at that table as in the period of the Renaissance itself.

"There was every type of spiritual and moral expression. The wistful and sanguine, I had almost said hectic, idealism of James Hinton. The noble and steadfast, but somewhat melancholy, faith which seemed to be sculptured on Dr Martineau's massive brow, shaded off into wistfulness in the glance of his eyes. Professor Huxley, who always had a definite standard for every question which he regarded as discussable at all, yet made you feel that his slender definite creed in no respect represented the cravings of his large nature. Professor Tyndall's eloquent addresses frequently culminated with some pathetic indication of the mystery which to him surrounded the moral life."

At the outset, however, judging from Mr Froude's account, things did not move very smoothly. A speaker at one of the first meetings laid down emphatically, as a necessary condition to success, that no element of moral reprobation must appear in the debates. There was a pause, and then Mr Ward said, "While acquiescing in this condition as a general rule I think it cannot be expected that Christian thinkers shall give no sign of the horror with which they would view the spread of such extreme opinions

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as those advocated by Mr Huxley." Another pause ensued and Mr Huxley said, "As Dr Ward has spoken I must in fairness say that it will be very difficult for me to conceal my feeling as to the intellectual degradation which would come of the general acceptance of such views as Dr Ward holds."

This pleasing change of amenities did not augur well for the brotherliness of the members, but it was the one only piece of uncompromising acrimony. "From that day onwards," says Mr Froude, "no word of the kind was ever heard; perhaps the 'madrigal' suggestion of the porter carried a possible ideal into the minds of the members."

"We thought at first," said Huxley, "that it would be a case of Kilkenny cats. Hats and coats would be left in the hall before the meeting, but there would be no wearers left after it was over to put them on again. Instead of this we came to love each other like brothers. We all expended so much charity, that had it been money we should have been bankrupt. Indeed," he adds, "the society died of too much love."

It certainly made for a more tolerant spirit among men of every shade of opinion. If it did not "put down" agnosticism, at anyrate it defined more clearly the points at issue.

"He often resented," said Mr Wilfrid Ward, "being identified with simple destruction in matters of religious faith, and disclaimed all sympathy with the scoffing spirit. His opposition to theology had not meant," he said, "opposition to religion." He

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wrote in 1894: "Faulty and incorrect as is the Christian definition of Theism, it is nearer the truth than the creed of some Agnostics who conceive of no unifying principle in the world."

In fact, the charge frequently levelled against Huxley that he was a materialist is not a correct one, and must be attributed to the common tendency to confuse religious sentiment with theological profession. Even Mr Hutton, who with all his tolerant sympathy is often too theological in his literary criticism, was greatly impressed by Huxley's distaste for dogmatic materialism, and has recalled the most celebrated passage in his most celebrated essay describing human life as something like a great game of chess between men and a hidden player, who always plays on the same rules, but who, as Huxley himself admitted, leaves men to find out by the use of their own wits what those rules are.\*

The passage is so characteristic of Huxley's attitude of mind that it is worth quoting in its entirety.

"Suppose it were perfectly certain that the life and future of every one of us would, one day or other, depend upon his winning or losing a game at chess. Don't you think that we should all consider it to be a primary duty to learn at least the names and the moves of the pieces; to have a notion of a gambit and a keen eye for all the means of giving and getting out of check?

"Do you not think that we should look with a

\* Vide *Contemporary Thoughts and Thinkers* (HUTTON), "The Great Agnostic."

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disapprobation amounting to scorn upon the father who allowed his son, or the State which allowed its members, to grow up without knowing a pawn from a knight? Yet it is a very plain and elementary truth that the life, the fortune and the happiness of every one of us, and more or less of those who are connected with us, do depend upon our knowing something of the rules of a game infinitely more difficult and complicated than chess. It is a game which has been played for untold ages, every man and woman of us being one of the two players in a game of his or her own. The chess board is the world, the pieces are phenomena of the universe, the rules of the game are what we call the laws of Nature. The player on the other side is hidden from us. We know that his play is always fair, just, and patient. But also we know, to our cost, that he never overlooks a mistake or makes the smallest allowance for ignorance. To the man who plays well the highest stakes are paid with that sort of overflowing generosity with which the strong shows delight in strength. And anyone who plays ill is checkmated, without haste but without remorse. My metaphor will remind some of you of the famous picture in which is depicted Satan playing at chess with man for his soul. Substitute for the mocking fiend in that picture a calm, strong angel who is playing for love, as we should say, and would rather lose than win, and I should accept it as an image of human life. Well, what I mean by education is learning the rules of this mighty game."

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One of Huxley's most noteworthy mental characteristics was his clear and vigorous logical faculty. But impressive in many ways as this illustration is, it lays itself open most assuredly to logical criticism. Can you call the unseen player "always fair, just and patient" if he will checkmate "without remorse" an opponent who in many cases has had no opportunities of learning the rules of the game? On what grounds, other than those of religious faith, could Huxley justify his assertion that the unseen antagonist is "a calm, strong angel who is playing for love and would rather lose than win"?

The picture, which would certainly irritate the scientific critic, furnishes a signal instance of how slight a hold logic has upon even the acutest mind, when impelled by those idealising tendencies that claim an equal voice in shaping our view about life.

So far a general sketch has been made of the man and his temperament. Certain characteristics, however, demand ampler treatment before we can feel that anything like a satisfactory portrait of Huxley has been attempted.

In the first place I would note his practical common-sense, often lacking in scientists no less than in theologians. Secondly, his passionate integrity. Thirdly, his ethical idealism.

His great success as a writer on scientific and educational subjects is due to the fact that he was not merely a clever theorist—a *doctrinaire*. He was a man of the world; he knew the practical difficulties that



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encounter all teachers, for he was not only a man of ideas but a man of action also. Perhaps he was better as a man of action. However that may be, he had that happy knack of adaptability which is the secret of the success of many politicians.

Roughly speaking, the world may be divided into men of thought and men of action, and properly speaking the one is incomplete without the other.

We depend on our thinkers for stimulus and inspiration, upon our men of action for showing the workable nature of various hypotheses and turning the dream of the idealist into practical account. The first gives colour, the second substance, to life.

In the domain of science we have the examples of Darwin and Huxley before us. No man of action—if the action is of any value—is without ideas, but one element must predominate. With Darwin it was thought and logic; with Huxley it was rather action and practicability.

His shrewd humour was invaluable here. It enabled him to detect flaws and weaknesses, and gave penetration to his judgments. In a discussion about some person whose great subtlety of mind was being discussed, Huxley said that the constant over-refinement of distinctions in his case destroyed all distinctness. Anything could be explained away, and so a thing came to mean the same as its opposite. Someone asked, "Do you mean that he is untruthful?" "No," replied Huxley, "he is not clear-headed enough to tell a lie."

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Dean Stanley's impressionable and imaginative nature was brought out by him in an anecdote. Stanley, keenly alive to the newest thought of the hour, liberal by family and school tradition, had sympathised in some degree with Colenso's treatment of the Bible, yet his historical impressionableness was remarkable. Huxley explained his position thus.

"Stanley could believe in anything of which he had seen the supposed site, but was sceptical where he had not seen. At a breakfast at Monckton Milnes', just at the time of the Colenso row, Milnes asked me my views on the Pentateuch, and I gave them. Stanley differed from us. The account of creation in Genesis he dismissed at once as unhistorical; but the call of Abraham and the historical narrative of the Pentateuch he accepted. This was because he had seen Palestine, but he wasn't present at the creation."

"It tickled his sense of humour," remarks Leslie Stephen,\* "in treating of miracles to call in Newman as an ally." Newman's doctrine of development admitted equally that the Christian dogma was not taught by the primitive Christians, and that its growth was a process perfectly intelligible and required no supernatural interpreter. Huxley's commonsense was conspicuous in treating of many theological questions. This may be admitted, I think, without necessarily committing oneself to assent to all his conclusions. He had no patience for mere academic subtleties, whether of theology or science. He drew attention to this point.

\* *Studies of a Biographer.*

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Agnosticism, according to him, meant simply this,—that you are not to accept as an established fact anything not fairly proved.

His practical commonsense led him into positions which were often inconsistent though none the less interesting on that account. He used materialistic terminology and repudiated materialistic philosophy.

“Materialism and spiritualism,” he said, “are opposite poles of the same absurdity—the absurdity of assuming that we know anything about either spirit or matter.” In his essay upon evolution and ethics he points out that though—so he maintained—evolution accounts for morality, yet the principle of evolution is not the ethical principle. The ethical progress of society depends not on imitating the cosmic process, but in combating it. And he works round to the conclusion that love is the inspiring principle of a progressive society. His bent of mind, however, was Carlylean rather than Shelleyan.

He observed on one occasion to Tyndall, “The world is neither wise nor just, but it makes up for its folly and injustice by being damnably sentimental.”

With sentimentality in any branch of thought, notably political and social subjects, he had as little sympathy as George Meredith. He once told an Irish carman to drive fast and the man set off at a hard gallop. “Do you know where you are going?” cried Huxley. “No, yer honner, but onyway I’m drivin’ fast.” He had no belief in brand-new panaceas for social discontent. Merely “driving fast” without

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any clear objective seemed to him as mischievous as it was foolish.

He was, I said, passionately whole-hearted. "A veritable passion for truth," remarks his son, Mr Leonard Huxley, though perhaps the term "truth" suggests more an abstract devotion than that love of the concrete so pronounced in Huxley's case. He had learned much from Carlyle, especially *Sartor Resartus*. This book had shown him, he says, how that a deep sense of religion was compatible with the entire absence of theology. His strongest conviction, he has told us, was that the one road to the alleviation of human suffering was veracity of thought and action, and the resolute facing of the world as it is when the garment of make-believe by which pious hands have hidden its uglier features is stripped off. "The only religion which appeals to me," he wrote to Romanes, "is prophetic Judaism. Add to it something from the Stoics and something from Spinoza, and something from Goethe, and there is a religion for men."

He admitted that theologians had recognised realities though in strange forms. Predestination, original sin and the primacy of Satan in this world were a good deal nearer the truth, he imagined, than the comfortable optimism culminating in Pope's doctrine, "Whatever is, is right."

On the death of his little son, to whom he had been devoted, Charles Kingsley, in his warm-hearted, generous way, had written him a letter of sympathy, and pointed out incidentally some of the belief in

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which he would himself have found consolation. In his reply Huxley said he had no *a priori* objection to the belief in immortality. But "it is totally without evidence," and the assertion that an unproved and unprovable doctrine is necessary to morality is altogether repugnant to him. "The most sacred act of a man's life is the assertion of a belief in truth." Men may call him whatever hard names they please, but they shall not call him a "liar." He would have endorsed George Eliot's saying that "the highest calling and election is to do without opium and live through all our pain with conscious clear-eyed endurance."

On educational matters there is the same plain speaking out, though he touches here on less controversial ground.

In one of his most stimulating essays on *A Liberal Education*\* he remarks, "To every one of us the world was once as fresh and new as to Adam. And then long before we were susceptible of any other mode of instruction Nature took us in hand, and every minute of waking life brought its educational influence, shaping our actions into rough accordance with Nature's laws, so that we might not be ended entirely by too gross disobedience. . . . The question of compulsory education is settled so far as Nature is concerned. Her bill on that question was framed and passed long ago. But like all compulsory legislation that of Nature is harsh and wasteful in its operation.

\* *Science and Education.*

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Nature's discipline is not even a word and a blow, but the blow without the word. It is left to you to find out why your ears are boxed.

"The object of what we commonly call education—artificial education—is to make good these defects in Nature's methods. And a liberal education is an artificial education which has not only prepared a man to escape the great evils of disobedience to natural laws, but has trained him to appreciate and seize upon the rewards which Nature scatters with as free a hand as her penalties. That man, I think, has had a liberal education who has been so trained in youth that his body is the ready servant of his will, and does with ease and pleasure all the work that as a mechanism it is capable of; whose intellect is a clear, cold logic engine with all its parts of equal strength and in smooth working order; ready like a steam engine to be turned to any kind of work, and spin the gossamers as well as forge the anchors of the mind; whose mind is stored with a knowledge of the great and fundamental truths of Nature and of the laws of her operations, one who, no stunted ascetic, is full of life and fire, but whose passions are trained to come to heel by a vigorous will, the servant of a tender conscience, who has learned to love all beauty, whether of Nature or of Art, to hate all vileness and to respect others as himself." \*

With this idea Huxley looked around him and found much fault with our universities and schools. He

\* *Science and Education.*

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missed what we call nowadays "the humanities," and depreciated the mere academic culture and the superfluous information miscalled education.

Throughout his life Huxley insisted on the study of physical science and literature as essential to a sound education. He thoroughly embraced Arnold's dictum that "a criticism of life" is the essence of culture, but he objected to his further proposition that literature contains the materials which suffice for the continuation of such a criticism. Culture, he held in common with Arnold, meant something quite different from learning or technical skill. It implied the possession of an ideal, and the habit of critically estimating the value of things by comparison with a theoretic standard. Perfect culture should supply a complete theory of life based upon a clear knowledge alike of its possibilities and of its limitations. But he could not admit that either nations or individuals would really advance if their common outfit drew nothing from the stores of physical science. According to Huxley the distinctive character of our own time lies in the vast and constantly-increasing part which is played by natural knowledge. In fact, the most elementary acquaintance with the results of scientific investigation shows us that they offer a broad and striking contradiction to the opinions so implicitly credited and taught in the Middle Ages. It was only natural, it may be said, that Huxley should lay such stress upon our education in the physical sciences, and give them the preference of a "classical education"; but few

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educationalists would deny that there is much in what he says which might be followed with advantage both in schools and colleges. A grounding in the physical sciences—physiology, chemistry, geography—would afford a far better basis for the average man's education than the smattering of Greek and Latin which passes for a classical education. Arnold, with all his fine insight into education problems, laid overmuch stress upon the literary and the classical side of education. For Huxley was the last person to question the importance of genuine literary education or to suppose that intellectual culture can be complete without it.

An exclusively scientific training, he says, will bring about a mental twist as surely as an exclusively literary training. The value of the cargo does not compensate for a ship's being out of trim.

To turn to the third characteristic—Huxley's ethical idealism.

Spencer's important contribution to ethical thought is his attempted reconstruction of ethical theory upon a naturalistic basis.

It may be of use, however, to state in a few words the general trend of his theory.

Conscience, in his view, is an inheritance transmitted from the habits of our forefathers and formed on them by slow accumulation of personal experiments. Hence the sense of moral obligation. The voice within us which proclaims certain things as right, others as wrong, may be traced to some social



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convenience in a primitive society. Men found out, say, that unless they respected each other's rights of property, society would dissolve: that mutual forbearance in these matters was for the good of the community. Thus the humble beginning of "Thou shalt not steal." These moral intuitions, though the results of accumulated experiences of utility, gradually organised and inherited, have come to be quite independent of conscious experiences.\* With this view in its general bearings Huxley also agreed.

"The end of society," he says, "is peace and mutual protection, so that the individual may reach the fullest and highest life attainable by man. The rules of conduct by which this end is to be attained are discoverable—like the other so-called laws of nature—by observation and experiment, and only in that way. Some thousands of years of such experience have led to the generalisation that stealing and murder, for example, are inconsistent with the ends of society. There is no more doubt that they are so than that unsupported stones tend to fall. The man who steals or murders breaks his implied contract with society and forfeits all protection. He becomes an outlaw to be dealt with as any other feral creature."

Facts are, I admit, against the intuitionist, who declares that every man has within him some divinely-implanted instinct of right and wrong. But they seem equally against the evolutionist, who finds in every form of moral obligation some inheritance of

\* *Introduction to Herbert Spencer* (Professor W. H. HUDSON).

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the past, and who links together evolution in the natural world and evolution in the world of humanity.

And in his ethical theory Huxley, it seems to me, is far more satisfactory, far clearer in his appreciation of contradictory facts than Herbert Spencer. And this is due to the fact, I think, that Spencer, with all his magnificent intellect, always mistrusted the emotions and seemed to have entertained an almost morbid horror of being swayed by mere feeling.

Not so Huxley; even at the risk of being inconsistent, he never shrank from giving expression to many sentiments, instincts and promptings, for which he had no logical label, and could not readily place in his philosophy.

His remarkable work on *Ethics and Evolution* deserves the closest consideration.

This work was, he explained, an effort to put the Christian doctrine that Satan is the prince of this world upon a scientific foundation. As it is by far the most important contribution of the scientist to ethical thought, I may be excused for dwelling on it at some length.

Man, the animal, has worked his way to the headship of the sentient world, and has become the superb animal which he is by virtue of his success in the struggle for existence. The conditions having been of a certain order, man's organisation has adjusted itself to them better than that of his competitors in the cosmic strife. In the case of mankind, the self-

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assertion, the unscrupulous seizing of all that can be grasped, the tenacious holding of all that can be kept, which constitutes the essence of the struggle for existence, have answered. In his successful progress throughout the savage state man has been largely indebted to those qualities which he shares with the ape and the tiger; his exceptional physical organisation; his cunning, his sociability, his curiosity and his imitativeness; his ruthless and ferocious destructiveness when his anger is roused by opposition. But in proportion as men have passed from anarchy to social organisation, and in proportion as civilisation has grown in worth, these deeply-ingrained serviceable qualities have become defects. "After the manner of successful persons," says Huxley, "civilised man would gladly kick down the ladder by which he has climbed." He would be only too pleased to see "the ape and tiger die." But they decline to suit his convenience; and the unwelcome intrusion of these boon companions of his hot youth into the ranged existence of civil life adds pains and griefs innumerable and immeasurably great to those which the cosmic process brings on the mere animal. In fact, civilised man brands all these ape and tiger promptings with the name of "sins"; he punishes many of the acts which flow from them as crimes; and in extreme cases he does his best to put an end to the survival of the fittest of former days by axe and rope.

Now, whatever differences of opinion may exist

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among experts, there is a general consciousness that the ape and tiger methods of the struggle for existence are not reconcilable with sound ethical principles.

So the position thus far reached by Huxley is that the ideals of the animal man and the ethical man are in direct conflict.

Yet, however diverse their views on philosophical and religious matters, most men are agreed that the proportion of good and evil in life may be very sensibly affected by human action. Hence the pressing interest of the question, To what extent modern progress in natural knowledge, and more especially the general outcome of that progress—the doctrine of evolution—is competent to help us in the great work of helping one another?

The propounders of what are called the “ethics of evolution” adduce a number of more or less sound arguments in favour of the origin of the moral sentiments. But what about the *immoral* sentiments? They have been—as Spencer would readily admit—no less evolved; and admit therefore of as much natural sanction for the one as the other. But you may urge the immoral sentiments—thieving, murder, etc.—would disrupt society. Therefore the others have a superior claim upon us. But there are qualities—pity, compassion, self-sacrifice—for which I think we can find no justification on grounds of utility for the high position into which we place them. And are we going to say that thieving and murder is *only* bad in so far as it would be what one

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might call a social inconvenience? Huxley must, I think, have had some such thoughts as these in his mind when he wrote, "Cosmic evolution may teach us how the good and the evil tendencies of man may have come about; but in itself it is incompetent to furnish any better reason why what we call good is preferable to what we call evil than we had before." Here, surely, he seizes the very kernel of the problem.

The "evolution" doctrine, every thoughtful man must feel, throws a flood of light on the "how" of things; but in attempting to explain the "why" Huxley virtually admits that it has failed.

"The ideal of the ethical man," he writes in an essay published five years previous to the above work, "is to limit his freedom of action to a sphere in which he does not interfere with the freedom of others; he seeks the common weal as much as his own, and indeed as an essential part of his own welfare. Peace is both the end and means with him, and he founds his life on a more or less complete self-restraint, which is the negation of the unlimited struggle for existence. He tries to escape from his place in the animal kingdom, founded on the free development of the principle of non-moral evolution, and to establish a kingdom of man, governed solely upon the principle of moral evolution."

To Huxley we are indebted for the clearing up of a popular misconception about the phrase "survival of the fittest." There is, as he points out, an unfortunate ambiguity in the phrase "fittest." "Fittest"

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has a connotation of "best"; and about "best" there hangs a moral flavour. In cosmic nature, however, what is fittest depends upon the conditions. If our hemisphere were to cool again the survival of the fittest might bring about, in the vegetable kingdom, a population of more and more stunted, and humbler and humbler organisms, until the "fittest" that survived might be nothing but lichens and microscopic organisms.

And so we come to this. Social progress means a checking of "the cosmic process" at every stage and the substitution for it of another, which may be called "the ethical process," the end of which is, not the survival of those who may happen to be the fittest, in respect of the whole of the conditions which obtain, but of those who are ethically the best.\*

"The ethical process," adds Huxley in a note, "is, strictly speaking, also part of the general process of evolution."

That, of course, no doubt may be so, but the *quality* of the process is not the same, and it further opens up more problems than it can solve. However, a further question awaits us.

How could ethical nature, as the offspring of cosmical nature, be at enmity with it? Huxley meets this question thus.

Taking, as an example, the ground on which his house was built, he shows how the industry of man has converted a patch of weed-choked, economically-un-

\* Vide *Evolution and Ethics*.

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productive soil into a fruitful garden, and how, if the skill and labour by which this has been done, are withdrawn, Nature, whose action never pauses, will re-assert her sway and convert the place into a wilderness. The garden is a work of art, as is the house which stands in it, as is everything that man has produced. And the effect of all that he does is to oppose and for a time arrest the cosmic process, limiting the area of ceaseless struggle and competition. Applying this to human society, which at its origin was as much a product of organic necessity as that of the bees, "the ape and tiger" instincts are found dormant. It was based on selfishness. The race was to the swift and the battle to the strong. Even then, however, in the earliest grouping of a few families into clans, the blood tie, whose source is in the parent, engendered a sympathy which assured unity, and therefore some restraint on individual assertion. For sympathy is the germ plasm of ethics. Knowledge, the only begetter of a wider sympathy, breaks down tribal divisions, and with the obvious advantages which co-operation secures, enlarges the narrow borders of primitive altruism, limits the area of conflict, and mitigates the horrors of a state of warfare which, at the outset, was chronic. To this the state of mankind, after thousands of years of advance from the feral state, witnesses, since only in the minority of all who have ever lived has that advance been made, and even among these there needs small provocation to rouse the lightly-sleeping tiger. Hence, whenever self-

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restraint is practised, there is checking of the cosmic process of bitter struggle by the ethical, defined by Huxley as the " evolution of the feelings out of which the primitive bonds of human society are so largely forged into the organised and personified sympathy we call ' conscience.' "

But, as the scientist admits,\* the theory of evolution encourages no millenarian anticipations. Life as a whole upon this globe is but a brief chapter of that history, and the life of man a momentary episode in the chapter.

The " human " note in Huxley is more vibrant than in Spencer. No man can repress his emotional nature sternly as he did, year after year, without suffering some disruption in his nature. Spencer's was naturally a kindly disposition, and he was not blind to the suffering of his fellow-creatures or careless of their welfare. But his social sympathies suffered from a kind of chilly timidity; and he could not have said, as did Huxley, " If I am to be remembered at all, I would rather it should be as ' a man who did his best to help the people ' than by any other title."

In some ways it must seem strange that Huxley should have felt so high an admiration for Tennyson's work as a thinker and artist. Tennyson's strong views on immortality contrast with Huxley's emphatic Agnosticism, and one would not have thought on a first comparison that the two men had much in common. But they had, and the more the two

\* *Professor Huxley* (EDWARD CLODD).



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personalities are considered the more remarkable, I think, will be found the points of contact. There was the same careful accuracy of observation and attention to detail; the same testing of views and theories, and the same prompt emotional temperament kept sternly in check, and not always discoverable beneath a rugged exterior. That curious mixture of scepticism and wistfulness which runs through Tennyson's poetry can be detected in the letters and conversation of Huxley. Neither man would suffer fools gladly, and each had a measure of reserve and a critical eye which made them seem unsympathetic to the casual observer. Yet each man was easily moved through his affections, and each man has expressed in much the same language his feeling as to the power of love in the world. Much of Tennyson's work suggests the work of an imaginative man of science—a scientist with the supreme gift of verse.

It will be urged, of course, that Tennyson's general attitude towards Agnosticism (after *In Memoriam*) was one of increasing dislike and impatience. This is true; but the most violent hostility always comes from the men whose temperaments tend to approximate. The Low Churchman has more in common with the Nonconformist than the High Churchman; but he is frequently more hostile in his attitude on that very account.

Yet the difference in the case of these two men was due not so much to difference of temperament (as in the case of Wordsworth, for instance, whose entire

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attitude of mind was wholly opposed to that of Huxley), as to the greater predominance in Huxley's case of the rationalistic spirit. Remember the difference in the men's vocation, recollect the work in which Huxley all his life was engaged, and you will marvel not that the conclusions which Huxley reached were different, but that he and Tennyson should have had so much in common.

For at heart Huxley was an idealist. The scientific spirit never swayed him so completely as it swayed Herbert Spencer.

It gave him that power of sincerity, that dislike of vague emotionalism that often passes currency as religion. He hated sentimentalities in any form—most of all in religious dress—and when he detected them he laid about with a hearty good-will.

But to look upon him as merely a negative force is a mistake. In his energy, perhaps, he uprooted sometimes harmless flowers as well as rank weeds. In his love for clarity of thought he possibly underestimated the value of dimly-outlined feelings which strongly affect our lives although incapable of sharp definition. But no man better respected honesty of conviction (however that conviction might differ from his own) and integrity of purpose. No man had a higher sense of duty in private and civic life; with all his pugnacity there was a strain of great tenderness and affection in his nature.

"Men, my dear," he said in one of his delightful letters to a friend, "are very queer animals, a mixture

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of horse nervousness, ass stubbornness, and camel malice, with an angel bobbing about unexpectedly like the apple in the posset, and when they can do exactly as they please are very hard to drive."

Some, I think, have seen only the "ass stubbornness" and "camel malice" in Thomas Henry Huxley, and have missed the "bobbing angel," which is a pity.

Beneath all his virile energy there was a passionate wistfulness that in a less active, less self-controlled nature would have made for pessimism.

But there is nothing in Huxley's stoic philosophy of that poignant fatalism vibrant in the pleasure gospel of Omar Khayyam.

Not for him the despairing call, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die:" he is made of sterner stuff and echoes rather the words of W. K. Clifford, "Let us take hands and help, for to-day we are alive together."



## THE POET

“Time may restore us in his course,  
Goethe's sage mind and Byron's force ;  
But where will Europe's latter hour  
Again find Wordsworth's healing power ?”

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

## WORDSWORTH

CERTAIN philologists derive the words "minister" and "minstrel" from the same root. This fact is not without significance. The poet and the prophet are fundamentally at one. The bard, his "heart made quiet by the deep power of joy, sees into the heart of things." No mere "idle singer of an empty day" is he, but one, in Tennyson's words,—

" . . . bravely furnished all abroad to fling  
The winged shafts of truth,  
To throng with stately blooms the breathing Spring  
Of Hope and Youth."

The two poets of our age whose utterances have had the most significant prophetic ring about them, and who have seen into the heart of things more deeply than any of their contemporaries, are, I think, William Wordsworth and Robert Browning.

It would be hard to find a greater contrast in temperament and method than the reserved, austere recluse of Rydal Water and the quick, eager man of the world whom Tennyson once laughingly threatened, with reference to his liking for dinner-parties, that he would "die in a white tie."

Wordsworth profoundly interested in man—caring little for Tom, Dick and Harry; Browning loving Tom,

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Dick and Harry better than all the "still sad music of humanity" heard from meditative heights.

In short, they differed upon almost every point except one—and that one was that "the world's no blot for us: it means intensely and means good." Wordsworth and Browning were heartily agreed upon this, and each in his own way set about to define some philosophy of life in terms of poetic art, such as would express this feeling.

Shelley's interpretation of the universe as permeated by love appealed obviously more readily to Browning than Wordsworth's interpretation of harmony, "a central peace subsisting at the heart of endless agitation." But the artist in Shelley was greater than the teacher, and in Wordsworth and Browning, great artists though they were, their matter rather than their manner was the primary consideration.

No doubt this didactic element often marred the poetic value of their work. Let that be conceded. The fact remains, in both poets the prophetic element dominates to an unusual extent.

With Browning's philosophy I am not concerned in this paper except to say that it supplements in the most admirable way that of Wordsworth, and that after seeking with the Lake poet

"The silence that is in the starry sky,  
The sleep that is in the lonely hills,"

and realising with him that

"The meanest flower that blows can bring  
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears,



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it is good for one's soul to leave nature-worship for crowd-worship. All the same, Browning's crowd-worship is appreciated the better for having one's brain cleared and one's pulse steadied by the cool, bracing air of the Cumbrian Hills.

I am not concerned here especially with what Wordsworth esteemed his "message" to his generation. When a poet is most self-conscious of his message he is the least convincing. The wind of inspiration bloweth where it listeth, and when the poet laboured to unburden his moral, his guardian angel, more often than not, declined to be an accessory to the fact. The moral of a poem is the spirit of the poem, its dynamic quality; not, as Charles Lamb pithily said, a tag to be appended like the "God send the good ship into harbour" at the end of a bill of lading.

But Wordsworth, especially in his medial years, was a supreme artist, and the poet in him would have nothing to do with the formal moralist.

The very reverse of Lamb in temperament, he yet runs the same risk as Lamb did of being wrongly estimated. Lamb, full of whims and caprices, extravagant moods and a wilful childishness that puzzled and offended serious men like Carlyle, was often put down as a wild, irresponsible creature, amiable and amusing, perhaps, but with no solid depth. And yet as we know, those surface qualities which so charmed some and so offended others, concealed a fine moral beauty and astonishing strength of character.

Wordsworth, on the other hand, whose portentous

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seriousness often moved the irrepressible Elia to some prank, was obviously deficient in those touches of light and shade, those little graces of disposition that endear a man to his friends, and it is thought by many that he was a cold, self-sufficient man. But he was not cold, and behind his natural reserve glowed a strong, deep, even violent feeling. His affection for his sister and daughter bears witness to this. But he had subjected his feelings to a rigorous self-control, knowing his own passionate nature.

De Quincey speaks significantly of the brooding intensity of his eye, and the bursts of anger at the report of evil doings, and Coleridge has referred to him in some memorable lines as an "ever-enduring man."

Among the many pen sketches of the man, that of Carlyle is perhaps the happiest, especially the unerring penetration shown in the concluding sentence:—

"He talked well in his way, with veracity, easy brevity and force, as a wise tradesman would of his tools and workshops, and as no unwise one would. His voice was good, frank and sonorous, though practically clear, distinct and forcible rather than melodious; the tone of him business-like, sedately confident, no discourtesy, yet no anxiety about being courteous; a fine, wholesome rusticity, fresh as his mountain breezes, sat well on the stalwart veteran and on all he said and did. You would have said he was a usually taciturn man, glad to unlock himself to audiences sympathetic and intelligent when such offered itself. His face bore

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marks of much, not always peaceful, meditation, the look of it not bland or benevolent so much as close, impregnable and hard. The eyes were not very brilliant but they had a quiet clearness; there was enough of brow and well-shaped; rather too much of cheek; face of squarish shape and decidedly boyish; large-boned, lean, and still firm knit, tall and strong-looking when he stood, a right good old steel-grey figure, with a fine rustic simplicity and dignity about him, and a veracious strength looking through him."

His treatment of Hartley Coleridge will serve to extenuate many little ungracious mannerisms. When all hope of reclaiming Hartley from drink was over, Wordsworth paid for his lodgings, took care of him and treated him with gentle, large-hearted consideration to the day of his death.

It has been well said that "a man who had not something of the fighter in him could never have defied the world as he defied it. His imaginative faculty made him a poet, but under all his intellectual life there throbbed the pulse of a valorous restlessness, and he had in him the pith and sinew of the hero . . . not a cheerful man, but a man who after a long battle has won the secret of peace, and walks a solitary path, clothed with silence, and winning from others the reverence due to the hermit and the sage." \*

Miss Martineau, in her interesting description of him, has depicted him as being often attended by half a score of cottagers' children, the youngest pulling at his

\* *Wordsworth*, by Professor RALEIGH.

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cloak or holding by his trousers, while he cut ash switches out of the hedge for them.

It is a pretty touch, and may be taken with other and less amiable vignettes of the "good old steel-grey figure."

There was very little of the dreamer in Wordsworth, scarcely any emotional by-play in his poetry. Imagination of a high order you will encounter constantly, but scarcely a touch of those fancies so dear as a rule to the poet's heart. He hoarded his emotional experiences with jealous care and deliberate austerity, and before exposing them to public view tested their worth at the exacting mint of spiritual meditation.

Unlike his great contemporary, Coleridge, he declined to drift with every chance current of emotion, but steered his course with steady purpose towards his goal,—the oneness of man with the elemental forces of life.

That this method of repression carried with it limitations is obvious. Variety, light and shade must needs be sacrificed. On the other hand, it certainly gave depth and intensity, whence came what Matthew Arnold finely called "the bare, sheer, penetrating power" of his best work.

Nature to Wordsworth was not a puzzling mechanism but a luminous organism. The relentlessness of natural laws that appalled Tennyson, "A Nature red in tooth and claw," scarce troubled Wordsworth at all. He felt so strongly behind it all a pervading harmony and brooding peace. The peace which Wordsworth

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felt in the presence of the mountains and dales, the woods and meadows, was not the dreamful ease of the lotus land, for it induced oft "a noble restlessness." It is, as he himself expresses it,—

"A central peace, subsisting at the heart  
Of endless agitation."

Wordsworth is sometimes spoken of as if he had shirked as poet the wilder and sterner aspects of Nature, and had contented himself with her sunnier moods. (Really, to hear some people speak of him one would think he had been some foolish old man with an unaccountable weakness for pet lambs and blinking stars and rhapsodies on wayside flowers.) The active principle that speaks to Wordsworth's soul from daffodil and primrose, from the blue sky and setting sun, is no less to be found in an Alpine storm. In a fine passage in "The Prelude" he tells us of—

"Winds thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn,  
The torrents skirting from the clear blue sky,  
The rocks that muttered close upon our ears,  
Black drizzling crags that spake by the wayside  
As if a voice were in them, the sick sight  
And giddy prospect of the raving stream,  
The unfettered clouds and region of the Heavens.  
Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light  
Were all like workings of the mind, the features  
Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree,  
Characters of the great Apocalypse,  
The types and symbols of eternity,  
Of first, and last, and midst, and without end."

No other poet has better realised the intimate vitality

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of Nature, or pictured in more magnificent language the coolness and the calm wrought into man's soul by communion with the earth.

The presence of a mighty transcendent power, manifesting itself in Nature, was as strong and as vivid to Wordsworth's mind as was the presence of that power, manifesting itself through the world of men and women, vivid to the mind of Browning. The matter of the universe was merely the vesture of a great spiritual power; a rock, a tree, a flower, a sunrise, were for him varying manifestation of this unifying principle.

Thus he speaks of times when—

“The gross and visible frame of things  
Relinquishes its hold upon the sense,  
Yea, almost on the mind itself, and seems  
All Unsubstantialised.”

He gazes around him and

“Ocean and earth, the solid frame of earth  
And ocean's liquid mass in gladness lay  
Beneath him.—Far and wide the clouds were touched  
And in their silent faces could be read  
Unutterable love. Sound needed none,  
Nor any voice of joy; his spirit drank  
The spectacle; sensation, soul and form  
All melted into him; they swallowed up  
His animal being; in them did he live,  
And by them did he live; they were his life.  
In such access of mind, in such high hour  
Of visitation from the living God.  
Thought was not; in enjoyment it expired,  
No thanks he breathed, he professed no regret;

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Rapt into still communion that transcends  
The imperfect offices of prayer and praise  
His mind was a thanksgiving to the power  
That made him ; it was blessedness and love."

And the peace that he finds everywhere at the heart of Nature fills the poet's heart with a deep, abiding joy—not the ecstatic rapture of Shelley, but a rich, measured contentment.

In the brightness of a spring morning he is conscious of this joy:—

" It was an April morning : fresh and clear.  
The Rivulet, delighting in its strength,  
Ran with a young man's speed ; and yet the voice  
Of waters which the river had supplied  
Was softened down into a vernal tone.  
The spirit of enjoyment and desire,  
And hopes and wishes, from all living things  
Went circling, like a multitude of sounds."

And yet the placid lake can awaken pleasure just as keen:—

" The calm  
And dead still water lay upon my mind  
Even with a weight of pleasure, and the sky,  
Never before so beautiful, sank down  
Into my heart, and held me like a dream."

The last passage, with its beautiful simile, reminds us of Wordsworth's superb power of actualising abstract impressions, especially silence and its converse sound.

He is the poet of the ear just as Shelley is the poet of

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the eye, and never more felicitous than in conveying some phase of silence, tone of sound.

The following passages will illustrate to some extent the dominant characteristic, for, as Shelley said, Wordsworth has awakened "a kind of thought in sense." The silence of the hushed elements in a famous sonnet :—

"The winds that would be howling at all hours  
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers."

"To lie and listen to the mountain flood  
Murmuring from Glaramara's inmost caves.

" . . . A gentle shock of mild surprise  
Had carried far into his heart, the voice  
Of mountain torrents."

How distinctively Wordsworthian these lines. What poet other than Wordsworth would have preferred the sound to the pictorial effect of the torrent? Shelley in particular would have delighted in dwelling on the prismatic effect of the sunshine upon the waters. Shelley, indeed, is a direct contrast, and insists on colour where we might reasonably expect that sound would have attracted him. Take his famous "Ode to the Skylark." He is more concerned with colour effects than the song of the bird.

"Higher still and higher  
From the earth thou springest  
Like a cloud of fire  
The blue deep thou wingest."

Then again, in the well-known description of skating



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("The Prelude") with what suggestive power does Wordsworth convey the still, frosty, sensitive atmosphere:—

"So that the darkness and the cold are fled.

Meanwhile the precipices rang aloud,  
The leafless trees and every icy crag  
Tinkled like iron, while far-distant hills  
Into the tumult sent an alien sound  
Of melancholy not unnoticed."

For suggesting silence, the restfulness of evening, and the spacious quietnesses of the country:—

"It is a beauteous evening calm and free,  
The holy time is quiet as a nun  
Breathless with adoration, the broad sun  
Is sinking down in its tranquillity."

"Love had he found in huts where poor men lie ;  
His daily teachers had been woods and rills,  
The silence that is in the starry sky,  
The sleep that is among the lonely hills."

As a rule it is in broad, massive effects that Wordsworth excels, but he could also give us delicate vignettes that Tennyson himself—a master in this line—has not excelled.

As, for instance:—

"Flaunting summer when she throws  
Her soul into the briar rose."

"'Twas summer and the sun had mounted high ;  
Southward the landscape indistinctly glared  
Through a pale steam, but all the northern downs  
In clearest air ascending, showed far off  
A surface dappled o'er with shadows fleecy  
From brooding clouds."

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Sketches like these live in the memory along with the exquisite scenic pictures of Southern England in "In Memoriam" and "Enoch Arden."

I might multiply illustrations of the joyousness of Nature, but space prevents my doing so, and many will, I am sure, recur to your minds. The poems throb with this great elemental happiness, from the mountain and river to the daffodils that "outdid the sparkling waves in glee," and to the asseveration that "every flower enjoys the air it breathes."

If we take such a phenomenon of Nature as a sunrise and compare the distinctive treatment of other poets, we shall get a clearer idea of the Wordsworthian point of view than by any amount of elaborate analysis.

Here is Shelley:—

"Lo, the sun upsprings behind ;  
Broad, red, radiant, half reclined  
On the level quivering line  
Of the waters crystalline ;  
And before that chasm of light,  
As within a furnace bright,  
Column, tower, and dome and spire,  
Shine like obelisks of fire."

The delicate, ethereal music of Shelley sends up a song of rapture. He asks for nothing more than to enjoy the sheer loveliness of the vision. If it conveys any intellectual idea, it is the idea of liberty. This you may trace in the various allusions to sunrise in "Queen Mab" and the "Revolt of Islam," and in the verse quoted the morning light touches for him the city of his dreams—the great Republic.

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Again:—

“ Let there be Light, said Liberty,  
And like Sunrise from the sea  
Athens arose.”

Or else the sunrise seems to embroider some pagan fancy  
as in the “ Hymn of Apollo ” :—

“ The sleepless Hours who watch me as I lie  
Curtained with star-inwoven tapestries  
From the broad moonlight of the sky ;  
Fanning the busy dreams from my dim eyes,  
Waken me when their master, the grey Dawn,  
Tells them that Dreams and that the moon is gone.

Then I arise and climbing Heaven’s blue dome,  
I walk over the mountains and the waves,  
Leaving my robe upon the ocean’s foam ;  
My footsteps pave the clouds with fire ; the caves  
Are filled with my bright presence ; and the air  
Leaves the green earth to my embraces bare.”

Now listen to Keats:—

“ Rain-scented eglantine  
Gave temperate sweets to that well-wooing Sun.  
The lark was lost in him ; cold springs had run  
To warm their chilliest bubble in the grass.  
Man’s voice was on the mountains, and the mass  
Of Nature’s lives and wonders puls’d ten-fold  
To feel the sunrise and its glories old.”

Note the difference in the atmosphere. With all its shimmering loveliness, the sunrise of Shelley is like a dream picture. The colouring is there, but you never *feel* the sunrise. Now in Keats’s lines there is the human touch, the scent of the flowers awakened by the sun’s warmth, and the sound of human voices, the multifold life of sentient things begins anew.

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In Byron's verse, on the other hand, the poetic sensibility of the poet to the pictorial beauties of sunrise but subserve to suggest to his restless mind that another day's enterprise has started.

"The morn is up again, the dewy morn  
With breath all incense and with cheek all bloom,  
Laughing the clouds away with playful scorn,  
And living as if earth contained no tomb  
And glowing into day : we may resume  
The march of an existence."

Nature is a glorious background for man's energies—this seems to be Byron's thought.

Despite differences, one bond of union unites all the romantic poets—Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley—a passionate devotion to Nature which we do not find in the later poets. Tennyson's feeling for Nature is that of the artist rather than the lover, and he has dwelt on her disquieting just as often as on her harmonious moods. In "In Memoriam" the exquisite etchings of sunrise and sunset, spring and autumn, are closely interwoven with the spirit of the mourner, and in the finest of all note the philosophic under-note:—

"And suck'd from out the distant gloom  
A breeze began to tremble o'er  
The large leaves of the sycamore,  
And fluctuate all the still perfume.  
And gathering freshlrier overhead,  
Rock'd the full-foliaged elms, and swung  
The heavy-folded rose, and flung  
The lilies to and fro, and said,

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'The dawn, the dawn,' and died away ;  
And East and West, without a breath  
Mixt their dim lights like life and death,  
To broaden into boundless day."

Note the change in the attitude, the minute exactitude of one who was a scientist as well as an artist ; the detached position, the breeze that ushers in the morn, speaks to him of the mystery of life and death. The very sunrise suggests metaphysics. He does not identify himself with Nature.

It is not without significance that the reader of Arnold's poetry finds plentiful allusions to sunset, but not one, except perhaps a fleeting one-line, half-hearted reference to sunrise. In Browning, however, we find a suggestion of Shelley's attitude when he passes from his pictures of men and manners to note some phase of Nature.

The sunrise in " Pippa " is perhaps the most characteristic:—

" Day !

Faster and more fast  
O'er night's brim, day boils at last ;  
Boils, pure gold over the cloud cup's brim  
Where spurting and suppressed it lay,  
For not a froth flake touched the rim  
Of yonder gap in the solid gray  
Of the Eastern cloud, an hour away ;  
But forth one wavelet, then another curled ;  
Till the whole sunrise, not to be suppressed,  
Rose, reddened, and its seething breast  
Flickered in bounds, grew gold, then overflowed the world."

There is a touch of the romantic passion here, nothing

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of the botanist nor of the philosopher; a frank joy in beauty of the sunrise. But with Browning the significance lies in its testimony to the universal vitality of Nature, and he hastens after this tribute to express:—

“Oh, Day ! If I squander a wavelet of thee :  
Then shame fall on Asolvo, mischief on me.”

There is nothing of the airy abstraction dear to Shelley. Sunrise does not suggest liberty so much as practical service.

Finally let us turn to Wordsworth. Of his many descriptions I select the one early in “The Prelude” as being the most typical:—

“Magnificent  
The morning rose in memorable pomp,  
Glorious as e'er I had beheld—in front  
The sea lay laughing at a distance ; near  
The solid mountain shone, bright as the clouds,  
Grain-tinctured, drenched in empyrean light ;  
And in the meadows and the lower grounds  
Was all the sweetness of a common dawn—  
Dews, vapours, and the melody of birds.  
And labourers going forth to till the fields.  
.  
.  
.  
My heart was full ; I made no vows, but vows  
Were then made for me ; bond unknown to me  
Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,  
A dedicated Spirit.”

Thus the sunrise is for Wordsworth, as indeed is every mood of Nature, a time of spiritual consecration. In none of the other quotations—whatever their merits may be—is there a suggestion of this identification between Nature and man, where an ordinary sunrise, a common dawn, comes into the poet's heart as a great

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spiritual awakening. He is not content, as is Keats, with depicting the earthly loveliness; he can feel it no less than he, but is chary of luxuriating in emotions that he feels should be turned to spiritual account. Not liberty, as with Shelley, but discipline is the keynote of Wordsworth's philosophy. Nor with Browning is he content to see in it one phase merely of the vitality in the universe. It does not suggest practical duties: it inspires practical duties.

I may, perhaps, better illustrate the difference between Tennyson's and Wordsworth's treatment of Nature if by an extract I remind you of the exquisite scenic embroidery in "Maud." This lover's fancy:—

"There has fallen a splendid tear  
From the passion flower at the gate,  
She is coming, my dove, my dear,  
She is coming, my life, my fate;  
The red rose cries, 'She is near, she is near';  
And the white rose weeps, 'She is late.'  
The larkspur listens, 'I hear, I hear';  
And the lily whispers, 'I wait.'"

Or this:—

"I know the way she went  
Here with her maiden posy,  
For her feet have touched the meadows  
And left the daisies rosy."

Few could be blind to the artistic beauty of these graceful fancies, but of course we know in our dull, prosaic moods they are but "love's conceits," or what Ruskin called the "pathetic fallacy."

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Now, compare with these pretty fancies the *vital* connection Wordsworth suggests between Nature and a young girl's beauty in that familiar poem:—

“Three years she grew in sun and shower,  
Then Nature said, ‘A lovelier flower’  
On earth was never sown;  
This child I to myself will take;  
She shall be mine, and I will make  
A lady of mine own.

The floating clouds their state shall lend  
To her; for her the willows bend;  
Nor shall she fail to see  
Even in the motions of the storm  
Grace that shall mould the maiden's form  
By silent sympathy.

The stars of midnight shall be dear  
To her; and she shall lean her ear  
In many a secret place  
Where rivulets dance their wayward round,  
And beauty born of murmuring sound  
Shall pass into her face!”

Indeed, so far from being a mere poetic fancy, the above poem is really a statement in terms of poetry, of the great scientific generalisation, the conservation of energy. And the latest results of science and the trend of modern philosophy seem to me to support the Wordsworthian conception of Nature—the conception of an immanent and transcendent principle unifying the phenomena of nature.

Rousseau's cry, “Return to Nature!” carried with it far deeper implications than, perhaps, he himself or his contemporaries at first realised.



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The revival of romantic feeling that took place in the closing years of the eighteenth century had turned the thoughts of the poet from the boudoir and the town to the cottage and the moorland. But from the time of Thomson, through the work of Gray, Collins, Burns and Cowper, till the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads*, the awakening sense of wonder and passion had given men not only new eyes and ears with which to observe and appreciate Nature, but a sympathy with the elemental naturalness and sincerity of rustic life. Wordsworth loved the country no less for its rugged sincerity than for its tranquil beauty.

The Arcadia of the elder poets, with its Strephons and Chloes and pretty artificialities, was swept aside. Wordsworth interpreted the spiritual significance of the peasant ; Crabbe, with greater realism if less imagination, his actual condition and circumstances. Here the country found its novelists as well as its poets. The Brontës made the lonely wilds of Yorkshire articulate, and in our day Thomas Hardy has found in the peasants of Wessex a strength, tenacity and massive force of character for which he looked in vain to the men and women of the towns. Even the fastidious artist Tennyson was most successful in his characterisation when dealing with his Northern Farmer and other country folk. There was a certain rough, barbaric strain in his nature that fitted him especially for this kind of work.

Browning certainly had more to say of the men and women in cities, and of the subtleties of the town, yet

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he is rarely happier than dealing with elemental types, and some of his most successful characterisations have the breath of the country, like "Pippa," "Pompilia," "Balaustion."

And this brings us to Wordsworth's treatment of man. Nature had awakened his earliest inspiration; under her influence he had dedicated himself to the life of the interpretative imagination. And he saw man—if I may so put it—through Nature's eyes, dwelling, therefore, not on accidents of temperament and disposition that go to differentiate men and women from each other, but on those primal qualities of humanity where man and Nature touch and blend.

And thus his love of Nature is transferred to the shepherd and simple dalesmen of the West, and after them to ordinary men and women with ordinary joys and sorrows.

The strong Republican sympathies of his earlier years gave a glow to his pictures of rural life where the real and ideal meet and blend, and where the humdrum is spiritualised. In later years, when the latent conservatism of his nature gained the mastery, and when he shrank from the Revolutionary watchword that inspired Shelley throughout life, his characterisation is less sure, and where once he had been content to let his pictures tell their own tale, he is anxious to emphasise some particular moral.

But already he had done much for the agricultural poor that Dickens was to achieve later for the town poor—had drawn attention to the tender homeliness of

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their lives, shown their fearless independence and rugged sincerity. Indeed, the sentiment of that hackneyed strophe from "Lady Clara Vere de Vere" concerning "kind hearts " and "simple faith" is more essentially Wordsworthian than Tennysonian in spirit. And his knowledge of peasant ways and of the peasant character was gained by patient, watchful investigation. He believed in them and he admired them, and with the passion of a scientist he collects eagerly facts and traits that may help him to build up his portraits. And it is ever one thing he is on the look-out for ; something to inspire man's higher faculties. He watches men and women with the expectant gaze of a man who is looking for some particular attitude or posture which he is anxious to portray. No doubt by this method he missed a great deal of rich human material, but he is a moralist at heart, with one steady purpose in view, and leaving aside much that was fascinating and perplexing, he contents himself with a few broad, simple issues. And there, at his best, he exhibits a massive splendour of compelling power. There is a fine sedative influence about Wordsworth's poetry which soothes and tranquillises rather than enervates, and John Stuart Mill, distracted by the political problem of the day, turned to him with infinite relief. " I felt myself," he says, " at once better and happier as I came under their influence." The curative influence attributed to " light rays," from which heat rays have been excluded, suggests an analogy with the influence of Wordsworth's work. The " heat rays " of poetry find little place in

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his calm, meditative muse; all that can fever or distract has been eliminated. What remains is a beneficent focus of cool light. Many have been the sick minds since Mill's time on whom the "medicine" of Wordsworth's poetry has wrought a like change.

Few poets neglect to pay homage to the moon and nightingale. Indeed, from time immemorial they have been considered as essentially poetic "properties." It is characteristic of Wordsworth to openly confess a preference for the dove, regarding the emotional ecstasies of the other bird with scarce-concealed disapproval. Wordsworth regarded all extravagances of emotion much as the ultra-puritan regards dancing. As for the moon, so far from suggesting lovers' vows and pretty sentimentalities to the poet, it gives him one of the most striking illustrations of man's power to transform his weaknesses to strength.

"Within the soul a faculty abides  
That with interpositions which would hide  
And darken, so can deal that they become  
Contingencies of pomp, and serve to exalt  
Her native brightness. As the ample moon  
In the deep stillness of a summer even,  
Rising behind a thick and lofty grove  
Burns like an unconsuming fire of light  
In the green trees, and kindling on all sides  
Their leafy umbrage forms the dusky veil  
Into a substance glorious as her own."

The mystery of moonlight has no attraction for Wordsworth as it had for Coleridge. He does not regard it primarily with the artist's eye, but with the

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eye of the philosopher. Not that it failed to appeal to the artist in him, but the artistic thrill is utilised by the poet to illustrate a spiritual experience. There is something magnificent about the way in which this hardy Cumbrian poet resolutely shaped his imaginative life, moulding his emotional experiences and suppressing any fretful and fitful desires, with a view to one harmonious whole.

Like one of the hills beneath which he dwelt there was a grand severity and noble simplicity about his character. And in the lofty atmosphere of his thought we catch a glimpse of

“ . . . truths that wake  
To perish never,  
Which neither listlessness nor mad endeavour,  
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,  
Can utterly abolish or destroy ! ”

## KEATS AND ROSSETTI

*(The Ideal of the Artist)*

EVERY poet must of necessity be attracted to whatever is beautiful in the world—beauty of form, sound or tint. It was Wordsworth's mission to seek for beauty in meadow and woodland and the mountain top, and to interpret this beauty in spiritual terms. Coleridge sought for the beauty that lay in the nebulous borderland between the seen and the unseen. For Byron, beauty was more an elemental force than a tranquil spirit. Beauty to Keats was a religion, a faith, a creed. It was not, as for Wordsworth and Coleridge, the vesture in which a great truth is clad; it was truth in its very essence. Shelley loved beauty also and worshipped her, but she appeared to him in blood-coloured robes, and he saw in her the Goddess of Freedom, whereas for Keats she was the Goddess of Repose. The Hellenic spirit touched both poets, but in different ways. One of its characteristics, the passion for liberty, burned with a pentecostal fire in the soul of Shelley; whereas Keats, in his finest work, gave complete expression to its passion for beauty of form. And—if one may venture on so prosaic a subject as mathematics for an illustration—can it not be said that in poets such as Keats, Tennyson and Rossetti we may

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study the statics of beauty, whereas for its dynamics we go to Shelley, Byron and Swinburne? It is with the former aspect of beauty that the following remarks are concerned, for in those poets who love to contemplate beauty in her reposeful moods one can follow most clearly the ideal of the artists. Once regard beauty as a force and you intellectualise her at once. In Shelley particularly you cannot dissociate the sentiment of beauty from the idea of liberty and certain social ideals.

And to consider poets like Shelley and Byron apart from the ideas they proclaimed is to do some injustice to their work. I do not deny that fugitive lyrics of Shelley may be enjoyed by anyone with music in his soul and for whom the watchwords of the French Revolution—liberty, equality, fraternity—are meaningless phrases. But I do feel that much of the significance of Shelley's work is lost, especially his longer poems, unless they are approached by those to whom the ideals of the Revolution are vital realities. And unless one can thoroughly enter into the sickness of heart and disillusionment that invaded many souls after the ghastly hour of "The Terror," it is impossible to estimate fairly the mood—or rather moods—of a man like Byron.

But the object of this article is to study the artist pure and simple. With the poet as politician or social reformer it has no concern. It deals with the poet as artist. And for this purpose I know of no two writers in the last century who better lend themselves to this

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treatment than Keats and Rossetti. Beauty, of course, admits of no analysis, and no logic is potent to press home its claim upon a mind insensible to its influence; while to those who instinctively feel the beauty in things, as the flower instinctively turns towards the sunlight, exposition may seem superfluous. And yet I think it may be possible to distinguish certain characteristics which, either separately or concurrently, create an atmosphere of beauty.

These three suggest themselves:—

- (1) A fine congruity of manner and matter—symmetry.
- (2) The power of vitalising and transfiguring commonplaces—colour
- (3) A subtle mingling of the sensuous and super-sensuous—perspective.

I have borrowed an analogy from a sister art to better suggest my meaning. Any one of these may contribute to the beauty of a picture, and they prevail in varying degree according to the character of the painter. Some are better as colourists, others excel as draughtsmen.

Rossetti, of course, interests us in his double capacity of painter and poet, but it is chiefly as a colourist that he excels in his pictures, his draughtmanship being notoriously careless; whereas the symmetrical excellence of his poems is extraordinarily fine. It seems to me that he expressed his genius far more completely in literature than he did in painting.

Although not a painter, the pictorial suggestiveness



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of Keats's poetry proved a fruitful inspiration to the pre-Raphaelite group of which Rossetti was the most distinguished representative. The extreme fondness for elaboration of detail, and the outlook upon nature, not as a rhythmic pageant of colour, but as a study in still life, is especially noticeable in the paintings of this school. It has been well said that the pre-Raphaelites arranged "images and impressions as the Japanese arrange flowers, so that each may keep its perfect independence and colour."

The pre-Raphaelites, as the name implies, were enamoured of the early Florentine painters who preceded Raphael, and it was because Keats resembled in his methods the methods of these painters that they were so attached to his poetry. It must not be thought, however, that men like Rossetti, Millais and Holman Hunt aimed merely at reproducing the characteristics of the Tuscan school, which was admittedly crude in its technique. They admired these painters chiefly for their sincerity of aim and simple devotional feeling, whereas they felt that the successors of Raphael were so under the spell of his genius that all real individuality was crushed. Ruskin, in his *Modern Painters*, had protested against the academic traditions which kept young artists making school copies of Raphael. Pre-Raphaelites recorded this protest in a practical manner. In substance, therefore, it was a groping after individuality, sincerity. Looking at the literary aspects of the movement we can see in it a reaction from the complex, philosophical poetry of the mid-century, a desire to

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return to the tradition of the romantic poets and to restore the spirit of beauty to English verse.

Before discussing certain aspects of the work of Keats and Rossetti some personal characteristics invite attention.

Keats is commonly imagined as a sickly hysterical youth. As a matter of fact he was a bright, enthusiastic youth, shy and reserved at times, but in the company of friends sane and cheerful in talk, and often with a vivacious humour of which there is little trace in his work. Afterwards disease sapped his energies and he became moody; but to the last he was brave and stoical. The best side of Keats's nature is not displayed in the love-letters to Fanny Brawne.

It has been thought of both Rossetti and Keats that they were men who surrendered themselves to the sensuous impressions of life, crying out, like the mariners in Tennyson's poem, for "dreamful ease." This is quite a mistake. Each man suffered from ill-health, and disease sapped to some extent their powers of volition. But each had power, grit and splendid capacity for work. The critical faculty of Keats was of fine quality, though of course his intellectual powers were not commensurate with those of Rossetti. The vapid emotionalism of the *Æsthetic School* received no encouragement from their master, Rossetti, who insisted on the necessity for "fundamental brain-work" in poetry.

Before chloral had shadowed his life and ruined his nervous system Rossetti was as breezy, boisterous and

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genial as an open-hearted boy. He was absolutely devoid of affectation, generous in his praise of others, and attracted his fellow-creatures by some personal charm, or perhaps eccentricity, not in the least influenced by social worth and scarcely at all by intellectual merit.

No doubt there is a strain of morbidity in both Keats and Rossetti; indeed, it is inseparable from the intense artistic temperament. But in neither case can it be said to have injured their work, and it was kept well in check by a strong commonsense.

In the warmth of his sympathies Keats was as remarkable as Rossetti. Less virile than his successor, and less dominating in his personality, he had, on the other hand, a strain of tenderness and consideration for others absent in Rossetti.

With these preliminary remarks I turn to a brief consideration of their work.

It will be convenient to consider the characteristics suggested separately.

### (1) *Symmetry.*

In looking first of all at the poetry of Keats it is natural to turn to the incomparable Odes, where the poet's genius finds its completest expression. When we realise that these poems were written within a month or so of each other by a youth of twenty-four, it is easier to appreciate what Tennyson meant when he remarked that had Keats lived he would have been "the greatest of us." Even as it is, for amazing beauty

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of form they stand on a higher level than the fine Odes of Wordsworth, and if at moments, as in the "Ode to a Nightingale," the surge of romantic feeling seems to overflow and passion touch the confines of hysteria, it is marvellous on the whole that one with such a sensitive, sensuous nature as Keats had should have combined the warmth and glow of passion with the splendid, deliberate restraint of classic art.

In his earlier work, in "Endymion" and "Isabella," with all their richness of colour, the reader is conscious of a brilliance that is often fatiguing to the eye, and amidst lines of wonder and delight, ill-chosen and unpleasing phrases. But with the advent of "Hyperion" the period of splendid immaturity had passed.

For many readers, no doubt, "Hyperion," with its Olympian deities, is less interesting than "Endymion" with its burden of restless love, or "Isabella" with its tender sentiment. It has been objected that Milton's influence is too overshadowing, and the fragment too much in the nature of an experiment.

But the Miltonic influence, with its chastened eloquence and stately sonorous music, was precisely what Keats needed. An experiment no doubt it was, and the poet did well to leave the poem a magnificent fragment. Before "Hyperion" he had shown how brilliant a colourist he was, but his draughtsmanship had been defective. In the Odes the draughtsmanship is only a shade less perfect than the colouring.

With the colouring, however, we are not concerned for the moment. The draughtsmanship, the symmetry

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claims our attention. Take as an instance the exquisite "Ode on Autumn."

"Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,  
Close bosom friend of the maturing sun ;  
Conspiring with him how to load and bless  
With fruit the vines that round the thatch eaves run ;  
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage trees,  
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core."

How every word, every line, every suggestion carries with it the autumnal atmosphere. Nor is there any philosophising, as we should find with Tennyson, who sees in autumn a time of decay, the herald of approaching dissolution.

"The woods decay, the woods decay and fall,  
The vapours weep their burdens to the ground."

Lovely lines, but there is a dirge about them. Not so Keats; he can enjoy to the full the several delights of the varying seasons.

Listen to him :—

"Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?  
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—  
While barred clouds bloom the soft dying day,  
And touch the stubble plains with rosy hue ;  
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn  
Among the river shallows, borne aloft,  
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies ;  
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn ;  
Hedge crickets sing ; and now with treble soft  
The redbreast whistles from a garden croft,  
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies."

Surely here is one of Nature's moods seized upon and

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expressed unerringly in terms of art. The poetry comes naturally—as Keats was wont to declare poetry should—“as leaves to a tree.”

He entered into the life of Nature as unreservedly as Wordsworth and as passionately as Shelley. “The setting sun,” he writes, “will always set me to rights; or if a sparrow come before my window, I take part in its existence and pick about the gravel.”

When he first began to write, shaken with the violence of his own emotions, the acuteness of his sensibilities, he could only stammer eloquently. The wealth of his perceptive life bewildered and embarrassed him. Gradually he found speech, and although an Oriental extravagance of emotion breaks out from time to time, suggesting to our Western temperaments hysteria rather than passion, no poet has excelled Keats at his best for deliberate loveliness of workmanship. He treats words as William Morris treated the handicrafts, as though he loved them. Indeed, the thought that inspired him as a poet, the thought condensed into those well-known lines in the “Ode on a Grecian Urn”—

“‘Beauty is truth, truth, beauty,’—that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know,”

lies at the very root of Ruskin’s teaching and Morris’s social gospel. The insistence on beauty as a spiritual principle carried with it new democratic ideals of which probably Keats never thought, but which were to bring literature and life into far more intimate relations, and it seems somewhat strange that the poet

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whose work was the most secluded from the rush and turmoil of daily life should have reminded us so insistently of this eternal fact. Yet holding as he did the oneness of beauty and truth—just as did Goethe the oneness of beauty and goodness—the Pagan in him cries out with despair when he meditates on the transitoriness of life, and he feels that beauty itself shares in the mutability. Thus in his "Ode to Melancholy" he exclaims,—

"She dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die ;  
And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips  
Bidding adieu."

Exquisite alike its diction and pathos, it is really out of harmony with the nobler and inspiring thought that suggests the unperishable nature of beauty. The persistent, energising power of beauty in which Shelley insists so often is, it seems to me, a greater and worthier thought.

"The love whose smile kindles the Universe,  
The Beauty in which all things live and move."

This, however, is somewhat of a digression and does not effect at anyrate the claims of Keats upon our admiration for the noble substance and symmetry of his best work. The particular mood of the poet is independent of the power that he wields by the beauty he disseminates. The artist jealous for his ideal, and passionate in his attachment, suffers from despondencies and humours from which men of grosser sensibilities are free. And the thought underlying the "Ode on

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Melancholy" is obvious enough. Inspiration and longing are inseparable from melancholy, and the deepest joys are mingled with sadness. If we want a statement on the other side we may find it in a later writer, a lesser artist, but a poet with a far larger view of life—Browning.

"A man's aim should exceed his grasp  
Or what's a heaven for."

And yet unless one fully enters into the spirit of Keats's work, with its "fine excess" of sensibility and loveliness of texture, even the tonic influence of Browning loses much of its significance.

"Rossetti," wrote Ruskin in *Præterita*, "was really not an Englishman, but a great Italian tormented in the inferno of London." The Italian side of Rossetti's temperament certainly impresses most of his work. The frank voluptuousness of his wonderful sonnet sequence, *The House of Life*, is the reverse of English. The Northern temperament, naturally reserved and secretive where the emotions of love and religion are concerned, shrinks from dwelling on the sensuous manifestations of passion. And one may add that if it is betrayed into doing so an aggressive coarseness displays itself at once.

This is not so with the Southern temperament; fevered and morbid as their erotic and devotional literature may seem, it is never coarse. The reverential devotion to the beauty of the body, which strikes most Englishmen as mawkish and unwholesome, and not a



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few as immoral, is far removed in spirit from mere eroticism. The senses were for Rossetti sacramental emblems of the spirit. In every department of thought and emotion, not in love only, Rossetti sought for the outward manifestations. Where Tennyson sentimentalises and Browning intellectualises, Rossetti read off the physical expression of certain sides of life. But he valued the physical expression, the outward manifestation, not as does the mere sensualist as something disconnected from the inner life, but as the visible sign of the invisible power that moulds life or character into beauty and nobility. He worshipped beauty

“ Whose speech Truth knows not from her thought,  
Nor love her body from her soul.”

But there was something other than the subtle sensuousness of the South in Rossetti's poetry. There was behind it all an intellectual power, Northern in its grip, clearness and restraint, which informs nearly all that he wrote. Compare the love poems of Rossetti with one of D'Annunzio's romances and you are conscious at once of a fine sobriety and dignity in Rossetti's work absent from the brilliant, hectic writing of the Italian novelist.

There is a solid strength in Rossetti's best work just as there is in Keats's a certain massive quality which demands notice before we turn our attention to those characteristics more obvious to the student—colour and mysticism.

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In the "Burden of Nineveh" manner and matter are perfectly fused. The huge winged stone bulls of Nineveh start a reverie in the poet's mind in which he thinks with misgiving on the civilisation of our own day. He reflects how smugly we talk of the baseness of the elder civilisations, and shake our heads at mention of Babylon and Nineveh. Yet may it not be that this *bas-relief* dug out from the ruins of Nineveh, and now looking down from the walls of the British Museum, will be discovered years hence in the ruins of London, and the discoverers imagine it to be our God?

"Who finding in this desert place  
His form, shall hold us for some race  
That walked not in Christ's lowly ways,  
But bowed its pride and vowed its praise  
Unto the God of Nineveh."

A vein of grave and delicate satire runs throughout the poem, and the splendid rhythm of the metre gives it the fullest possible effect. To the lover who watches the murmuring stream Rossetti has interpreted its message in delicate and gracious music :—

"What thing unto mine ear  
Would'st thou convey—what secret thing  
O wandering water ever whispering?  
Surely thy speech shall be of her.  
Thou water, O thou whispering wanderer,  
What message dost thou bring?  
Say, hath not Love leaned low  
This hour beside thy far well-head,  
And there through jealous hollowed fingers saw  
The thing that most I long to know,—"

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The very cadence of the stream, with its soft ebb and flow, seems to have been captured by the poet. Less direct and universal in its appeal than Tennyson's brook, it displays the same mastery for charging with human emotion some aspect of Nature.

But the finest illustration of Rossetti's exquisite workmanship and of its marvellous symmetrical excellence is found in his sonnet sequence, *The House of Life*. If there is any fault to find it is that the form is too exquisite. So much care has been exercised that we are over-conscious of the deliberation of the artist at times. But despite a certain lack of freshness and spontaneity at times, it contains some of the finest love poems in the language, and takes its place beside the memorable *Sonnets from the Portuguese* of Mrs Browning.

His use of resonant classical words is especially effective:—

“ Ah ! who shall dare to search through what sad maze  
Henceforth their incommunicable ways  
Follow the desultory feet of death ? ”

(2) *Colour*: The power of vitalising and transfiguring facts.

One of the supreme gifts of the poetic faculty is the glorification of what we term commonplaces of everyday life. The greatest achievements of imaginative art lie not in depicting the majestic and terrible—one needs no telescope to see the lightning—but in the revelation of the common bush.

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"It is not," wrote Ruskin in his *Modern Painters*, "in the broad and fierce manifestation of the elemental energies, not in the clash of the hail nor the drift of the whirlwind, that the highest characters of the sublime are developed."

A popular idea that great poetry must necessarily deal with extraordinary and out-of-the-way subjects is the very reverse of the truth. Poetry is great because it deals with ordinary subjects in an extraordinary way. Beauty loves best not the thunder and the whirlwind, but the still, small voice.

Nowhere is it easier to test this than in the poetry of Keats and Rossetti. Both poets had a fondness for far-fetched subjects and recondite phrases. In Keats the taste for the elaborately ornate was strongly marked, and in both poets, Rossetti especially, a fondness for the morbid and esoteric persisted. Yet their highest achievements in verse do not rest on the exotic charm, considerable as it may be, of their work but in their simplicity and in their faithfulness to the facts of life transfigured by poetic art.

"Lucent sirops tinct with cinnamon"

is a line of beauty.

But more beautiful are these lines depicting a trait of Nature:—

"A little noiseless noise among the leaves  
Born of the very sigh that silence heaves."

Truth and beauty are indeed blended in one in this exquisite piece of imaginative observation.

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Then again this stanza from the "Ode to a Nightingale," how perfect the suggestion of a summer night. A fact, vitalised:—

"I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,  
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,  
But, in embalmèd darkness, guess each sweet  
Wherewith the seasonable month endows  
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;  
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;  
Fast fading violets covered up in leaves;  
And mid-May's eldest child,  
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,  
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves."

No far-fetched fantasy here—a poet, the mood, and a night in June—and a matchless creation of art is the result.

Nothing can be more characteristic of the elusiveness of beauty than the fact that in those poems where Keats most strenuously strives after beauty he should be comparatively ineffectual. The reader is conscious of an over-laden richness and ornate elaboration which, though not without a certain attractiveness, does little more than touch the fringe of beauty.

On the other hand, where the poets succeed, where the breath of inspiration blows, then the great poets like great mountains converge together, however distant their base, and the varying notes of their characteristics as writers blend into one harmonious whole of simplicity.

For opulence of colouring Rossetti is perhaps inferior to Keats, but in the variety of his colour effects he

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certainly rivals his predecessor. One never forgets the pre-Raphaelite painter in his poetry. He draws upon mediæval art in his poems in a way that Keats, who was not especially interested in pictures, never did. There is the technique even of the mediæval colourist in such poems as "The Blessed Damozel" :—

"The blessed Damozel leaned out  
From the gold bar of Heaven  
She had three lilies in her hand  
And the stars in her hair were seven."

Again:—

"And the souls mounting up to God  
Went by her like their flames."

How exactly in the spirit of pictorial symbolism! And in such a modern poem as "Jenny" the poet cannot resist recalling a picture by the Florentine painters. Even when not written for pictures his poems almost invariably suggest pictures. As a rule there is greater elaboration of detail than we find in Keats; sometimes it is wearisome, but more often it is finely effective.

Note the exquisite workmanship of these lines where the painter peeps out:—

"Thine eyes grey lit in shadowing hair above."

"But where wan water trembled in the grove  
And the wan moon is all the light thereof."

"Sweet twining hedgerflowers stirred in no wise  
On this June day; and hand that clings in hand;  
Still glades; and meeting faces scarcely fanned;

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An osier-odoured stream that draws the skies  
Deep to its heart ; and mirrored eyes in eyes ;—  
Fresh hourly wonder o'er the Summer land  
Of light and cloud ; and two souls softly spanned  
With one o'er-arching heaven of smiles and sighs."

Of singular felicity are the last lines of the following:—

" Together on his heart for ever true  
As the cloud-foaming, firmamental blue  
Rests on the blue line of a foamless sea "  
" Where the long cloud, the long wood's counterpart,  
Sheds doubled darkness up the labouring hill."

About his later poems there is an Oriental wealth of colouring largely due to his literal use of archaic words, but more effective is the simplicity of his earlier manner. One could not deny a certain Eastern loveliness to these lines :—

" Gloom girt 'mid Spring-flushed apple growths she stands ;"  
" That face, of Love's all-penetrative spell  
Amulet, talisman and oracle  
Betwixt the sun and moon, a mystery."

But of more compelling magic are these lines, Wordsworthian in their severe simplicity:—

" Her eyes were deeper than the depth  
Of waters stilled at even."

In that remarkable poem, " A Last Confession," where one can trace the influence of Browning, the distinctive attitude of the colourist persists none the less throughout. It is the story of a murder, and the colour red gleams through the verse from the very opening, where the man finds the child on the hills and

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she tells him her parents had left her and walked into the "great red light" down to the catastrophe, when "sea and sky were blood and fire, and all the day was one red blindness."

- (3) *Perspective*: A subtle mingling of the sensuous and super-sensuous.

In this characteristic, Coleridge and Rossetti of our modern poets stand supreme. There are two poems of Keats where the magic of mysticism is unmistakable, the ballad of "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" and certain lines from the "Ode to a Nightingale." Neither Coleridge nor Rossetti have done anything finer. Indeed, the glamour of fairyland has been expressed once and for all in the matchless lines from the Ode. But looking at Keats's work as a whole, its beauty is not the subtle obscure beauty of mystic suggestion so much as the classic beauty of form and glow of colour.

To appreciate the ghostly power of Coleridge compare Keats's "Lamia" with "Christabel." Where Coleridge hints and suggests, Keats tries to impress by describing. The serpent woman attracts him as an artist—she is wonderful fantasy for a poet's eye to note and depict. Not so Geraldine, the witch in "Christabel." It is the psychical rather than the physical that attracts the elder poet.

All the unplumbed depths of personality, the eerie fascination of a problem not to be expressed in terms of humanity, affect him strongly.

The note of mystery is struck from the first:—



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" 'Tis the middle of night by the castle clock  
And the owls have awakened the crowing cock  
Tu-whit ! to-whoo !  
And hark again ! the crowing cock  
How drowsily it crew."

Christabel and the " lady " pass by the dying brands  
in the great hall:—

" They pass the hall, that echoes still  
Pass as lightly as you will.  
The brands were flat, the brands were dying,  
And in their own white ashes lying ;  
But when the lady passed, there came  
A tongue of light, a fit of flame,  
And nothing else she saw thereby."

Never once is she described, but her strange and  
sinister nature is suggested by subtle hints and touches,  
" A sight to dream of, not to tell," and the power of the  
poet's imagination is felt throughout.

Compare the elaborate description of " Lamia ":—

" She was a gordian shape of dazzling hue,  
Vermilion-spotted, golden, green and blue ;  
Striped like a zebra, freckled like a pard,  
Eyed liked a peacock, and all crimson barr'd ;  
And full of silver moons, that, as she breathed,  
Dissolv'd, or brighter shone, or inter-wreathed  
Their lustres with the gloomier tapestries—

She seem'd, at once, some penanced lady elf,  
Some demon'd mistress, or the demon's self.  
Upon her crest she wore a wannish fire  
Sprinkled with stars, like Ariadne's tiar :  
Her head was serpent, but ah, bitter-sweet !  
She had a woman's mouth with all its pearls complete :  
And for her eyes : what could such eyes do there  
But weep, and weep, that they were born so fair ? "

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A lovely piece of pictorial writing, like a glimpse of some strange tapestry, but of mysticism not a trace. And yet the poet who deliberately preferred the pictorial possibilities of "Lamia" to the subtle suggestiveness invited by the theme was attracted by mysticism in other directions. Metaphysical speculation so attractive to Coleridge moved him not at all. The elemental attractiveness of woman bewitched him, where it only suggested domestic possibilities to Coleridge. The mysticism of "La Belle Dame" is another sort of mysticism to that of Coleridge; it is the ancient mysticism of the body, not the mysticism of metaphysic.

The primal glamour of sex lies at the root of the wonderful ballad:—

"I met a lady in the meads,  
Full beautiful, a faery's child,  
Her hair was long, her foot was light,  
And her eyes were wild.  
I set her on my pacing steed,  
And nothing else saw all day long;  
For sideways would she lean, and sing  
A faery's song."

The human elements of old romance have never been better apprehended than by Scott, nor has Coleridge been excelled in his subtle treatment of its supernaturalism, but on the sheer witchery of its fantasy Keats, one feels, has said the last word, inspired by the nightingale's song:—

The same that ofttimes hath  
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam,  
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

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Never does Shelley, with all his dark caves and spectral forms, approach the mystic awesomeness of certain stanzas in the "Ancient Mariner," as, for instance, these:—

"Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,  
'Twas sad as sad could be,  
And we did speak only to break  
The silence of the sea

And the coming wind did roar more loud,  
And the sails did sigh like sedge ;  
And the rain pour'd down from one black cloud ;  
The moon was at its edge.

The thick black cloud was cleft, and still  
The moon was at its side :  
Like waters shot from a high crag  
The lightning fell with never a jag,  
A river steep and wide."

Very different from this imaginative realism is the mysticism of Shelley. With all its glamour there is less power in it to arrest and impress than we find in either Keats or Coleridge. It charms by its prismatic fancies rather than by sheer intensity. The mystic mantle of Coleridge was to fall neither on Keats nor Shelley, but at a later age on Rossetti, for mysticism is a fine mingling of the sensuous and super-sensuous, and Shelley's muse seems often poised midway between the two.

And what Coleridge did for the earlier years of the century Rossetti did for the later years. After the rush of poetry, charged and often heavily weighted

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with practical problems of the hour, he brought back the mystic spirit to our verse. Not the religious mysticism of his sister and of Tennyson and Browning, but the mysticism of the artist, with its fascination for the half-lights, for the undiscovered countries of thought and feeling. He had the power of impressing the imagination with splendid lines that suggested some half-expressed thought, some dimly-shadowed emotion, such lines as:—

“Girt in dark growths, yet glimmering with one star.”

“The ground-whirl of the perished leaves of Hope.”

“Words, whose silence wastes and kills.”

“The spacious vigil of the stars.”

That wonderful poem, “The Blessed Damozel”—wonderful had it been the mature work of the writer, more wonderful considering he was quite a youth when he wrote it—is full of fine, subtle touches. It has a freshness and spaciousness of imagination that is lacking in some of his more ornate later pictures.

The Blessed Damozel, leaning out from the gold bar of Heaven:—

“From the fixed place of Heaven she saw  
Time like a pulse shake fierce  
Through all the worlds. Her gaze still strove  
Within the gulf to pierce  
Its path; and now she spoke as when  
The stars sang in their spheres.”

The sense of vastness is splendidly conveyed in these lines.

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Then follows a stanza worthy of Coleridge, perhaps not uninspired by his magic:—

“ The sun was gone now ; the curled moon  
Was like a little feather  
Fluttering far down the gulf ; and now  
She spoke thro’ the still weather.  
Her voice was like the voice the stars  
Had when they sang together.”

In contrast with this sense of immensity, where in a bold line the earth is described as spinning in the void like a fretful midge, comes the wistful longing of the maiden for her lover still upon earth, and her passionate prayers for him to come to her soon.

Coleridge alone could match the haunting mystery of lines like these:—

“ Here high up in the balcony,  
Sister Helen,  
The moon flies face to face with me.  
Outside it’s merry in the wind’s sake,  
Sister Helen.  
In the shaken trees the chill stars shake.  
Hush, heard you a horse tread, as you spake,  
Little brother ? ”

All the witchery of twilight is here:—

“ When the leaf shadows at a breath,  
Shrink in the road, and all the heath,  
Forest and water far and wide  
Lie with the mystery of death.”

Sometimes, like Keats, he can suggest in a single superb line:—

“ And her far seas moan as a single shell,”

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which deserves to rank with the exquisite line in Tennyson:—

“Night slid down one long stream of sighing wind.”

Each is perfect in form and suggestion.

What poet has more exquisitely caught the spirit of the dream world, as seen through a lover's eye, as in “Love's Nocturn”:—

“Master of the murmuring courts  
Where the shapes of sleep convene !  
Lo ! my spirit here exhorts  
All the powers of thy demesne.  
For their aid to woo my Queen  
What reports  
Yield thy jealous courts unseen ?

Vaporous, unaccountable,  
Dream-world lies forlorn of light,  
Hollow like a breathing shell.  
Ah ! that from all dreams I might  
Choose one dream and guide its flight !  
I know well  
What her sleep should tell to-night.”

Here a common psychical experience is wrought into a thing of beauty by subtlety of treatment:—

“I have been here before,  
But when or how I cannot tell ;  
I know the grass beyond the door,  
The sweet keen smell,  
The sighing sound, the lights around the shore.”

The mystery of death and the poignancy of human

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parting breathe through the following verse like a sigh:—

“ A little while, a little love  
The scattering autumn boards for us  
Whose bower is not yet ruinous,  
Nor quite unleaved our songless grove.  
Only across the shaken boughs  
We hear the flood-tides seek the sea,  
And deep, in both our hearts they rouse  
One ail for thee and me.”

The atmosphere of religion pervades the work of Rossetti, whereas in Keats there is an entire absence of it. Yet Rossetti no less than Keats was largely pagan at heart and this divides them from poets like Wordsworth and Coleridge. There is not the poignant fatalism of the “ Rubaiyat ” of Omar about their poetry. Their attitude towards the Beyond is mainly one of indifference, but a sense of the perishableness of beauty and the transitoriness of life pervades their work.

With richer and more varied culture than Keats, Rossetti was drawn to the artistic beauties of Catholicism. Supernaturalism did not appeal to Keats: it fascinated Rossetti. No poet has been more touched by the aesthetics of religion than he, and no poet less influenced, perhaps, by its dialectics.

It is interesting to compare his poetry in this respect with Tennyson, to whom the problems of religious philosophy were ever clamouring for an answer. Rossetti looked on Christianity with the eye of an artist; Tennyson and Browning with the eye of a philosopher.

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Of the ethical inspiration of music Browning has sung, but for the mingled joy of sense and spirit we must turn to Rossetti:—

“ O cool unto the sense of pain  
That last night's sleep could not destroy ;  
O warm unto the sense of joy  
That dreams its life within the brain.”

“ The music lives upon my brain  
Between your hands, within mine eyes ;  
It stirs your lifted throat like pain,  
An aching pulse of melodies.”

“ So in the song, the singers, joy and pain,  
Its very parents, evermore expand  
To bid the passion's full-grown birth remain,  
By Art's transfiguring essence subtly spann'd ;  
And from that song-cloud shaped as a man's hand  
There comes the sound as of abundant rain.”

These few illustrations from the abundant treasury of Keats and Rossetti may perhaps indicate certain aspects of the ideal of beauty which the poet-artist sets before him. To seek for the beautiful in life and then portray it is the aim of every poet, of a Shelley and Tennyson no less than a Keats and Rossetti. But the quest of the beautiful is the most clearly discernible in the work of the poets chosen, for they were not, as were other poets of the century, distracted by rival interests. Both Keats and Rossetti seem to have lived as poets in a little world of their own, a world of wonder and delight, full of sweet sights and sounds, and out of ear-shot of the roar and clamour of every-day life. In broad human interest their work no doubt suffers as a



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whole from comparison with the work of poets like Tennyson and Browning, but granted the narrow limits of their realms they rule supreme. And comforting indeed it is to step aside from the dusty highway at times into the enchanted garden where they dwell.

And one leaves them with the feeling that the principle of beauty is no mere accident of form, but something that lies at the very heart of poetry. Possessing it, the poet speaks "with authority," not as "one of the scribes."



# THE NOVELIST

“The good, the gentle, the ever noble Dickens, every inch of him an honest man.”—CARLYLE.

## CHARLES DICKENS

### THE HUMORIST

THE extraordinary popularity which Dickens enjoyed as a writer during his lifetime suffered a temporary eclipse soon after his death, and is now again reasserting itself.

Many admirers of Dickens can sympathise with these tidal changes ; they can trace three stages in their feelings towards the novelist. The first period of whole-hearted allegiance and indiscriminate affection. Then with the coming of the moustache and Byronic humours (or, nowadays, Shavian humours) a period of criticism, when spots were discovered on the sun, and the subtle, more cynical humour of Thackeray proved perhaps more agreeable to the palate. Finally, the return to their first love, with an appreciation of the amazing fact that our literary affections may be comprehensive enough to hold both Thackeray and Dickens. The third stage shows a diminished ardour maybe for the more farcical elements in the novelist's work, but there is a far juster appreciation of the artistic power of the writer, the vitality of his creations and the astounding diversity of his humour.

The fastidious critic has long since solemnly cursed the author of *Pickwick* much as the cardinal cursed the jackdaw.

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His reputation was declared a mushroom growth, and must soon die away. Possibly owing to the critic's agricultural eccentricities having led him to mistake an oak for a mushroom—the prediction remains unaccomplished.

And yet few great writers probably are at once so open to criticism and so independent of literary criticism as Dickens. Whatever he may have lacked he never lacked vitality, and vitality covers a multitude of literary sins.

The democratic movement, with its wave of humanitarian feeling, that passed over England in the early years of the nineteenth century, had Shelley for its singer, Carlyle as its somewhat reluctant prophet, and Dickens as its story-teller. Warm-hearted reformers like Wilberforce, Ashley, Cobbett and Robert Owen voiced the political needs of the time, while Dickens sent the brilliant search-light of his humour over the joys and sorrows of the poor. He gave an actuality, a realism to the English novel which it had hitherto lacked. His vivid pictures of late Georgian and early Victorian England, his bitter invectives against certain social institutions, and his inimitable satire of our national weaknesses bespeak not only a man of rare observation, but a man who knew by bitter experience the life he was depicting. He was no "gentleman at ease," writing about poverty in order to obtain fresh local colour for his stories. He was a man of the people. By dint of sheer force of character, and with no help save that provided by his own pluck and

perseverance, he reached a position of comparative affluence. But his childish sufferings and early struggles had seared his imagination; they were always present to his mind when he wrote about the poor, inspiring his pen with that mingled pity and anger always discernible in his social sketches. No scientific inquirer he, balancing nicely the faults and merits of the various sections of the community. He was frankly a partisan, holds a brief for the poor and declines to be briefed by the other side. From an almost starving youth, unknown and unbefriended, he rose to a position of fame which men of greater intellectual power have never attained. When he died, his name was a household word; it was not literary admiration so much as personal affection which thousands of men and women felt for the author of *David Copperfield*.

On the publication of *Pickwick* in 1837 the English novel was in need of some vitalising influence. The deep-veined humanity of Fielding had found no worthy successor. Scott had ransacked the Middle Ages to colour his romances. Jane Austen's delicate filagree work was too fragile for the wear and tear of ordinary humanity. The modern psychological novel was as yet unborn. And the note of passionate revolt from the Yorkshire moors and of sturdy radicalism from the parsonage at Eversley had not yet been sounded.

The stage was clear. A brisk, alert young journalist, "Boz" entered. It was felt immediately that a new force had come into English letters. Dickens came; he joked; he conquered.

As a thinker we may not always find him satisfying. As an artist we may demur to his over-insistence on the primary colours, but the splendid humanity that breaks through his writings is a source of continual delight. Those of us who expect the novelist to be a guide, philosopher, and friend, may object to his summary views on poetic justice. But as Hazlitt said *apropos* of Wordsworth, let us take the gifts the gods provide without grumbling. The author of *Pickwick* never posed as a philosopher or undertook to be a guide. He was content to be a friend, and a more genial, inspiriting companion it would be hard to find.

Humorists like Dickens have what may be called rainbow sympathies, where smiles constantly irradiate the tears. Laughter and tears lie closely together, and frequently invade one another's territory. Dickens is never more effective than when he is smiling through his tears. That scene in *Copperfield*, where Mrs Creakle breaks the news of his mother's death, is none the less moving in its pathos for the delightful touches of the small boy's morbid self-consciousness, and of Traddles comforting him by drawing skeletons. Less familiar but equally remarkable for its simplicity and poignancy—the better heightened by the humour of the Cheap Jack—is the sketch from Dr Marigold. One cannot do without the other. Humour divorced from pathos becomes hard and cynical, and where there is no restraining touch of humour pathos is apt to become maudlin and mawkish. This is especially true in the case of Dickens, as will be noted anon. The humour of Dickens is



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always clean and wholesome; his satire is reserved for what is mean and unlovely, but it carries no sneer with it. It is not corrosive as is some satire; merely antiseptic.

Humour is not only of one kind, it is as varied in its manifestations as temperament itself; there is the quaint, whimsical humour of Charles Lamb, which exhales from his writings like the scent of lavender from old cupboards. There is the impudent, breezy humour peculiar to certain American writers, such as Mark Twain and Artemus Ward, which like a peevish breeze twists all kinds of serious things into the most ridiculous shapes. Then again there is the philosophic humour of writers like George Eliot and Oliver Wendell Holmes, whose humour expresses itself in pithy sayings and witty metaphors. Wit, indeed, is a kind of sedate elder brother to humour, more intellectual than its relative, and more ordered in its general behaviour. It is very difficult to dissociate wit and humour, but comparatively easy to come across humour devoid of wit. A good example of this may be found in two characterisations, each remarkable in its way, by George Eliot and Dickens—Mrs Poyser and Mrs Gamp. Mrs Poyser's humour is more of the intellectual and philosophic order; for instance, "I can count a stocking top while a man's getting his tongue ready, and when he's out wi' his speech at last there's little broth to be made on't."

Mrs Gamp's humour is, however, quite devoid of any pretensions to intellectual acumen; it is merely delightfully irresponsible nonsense.

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"There are some happy creeturs as Time runs backards with, and you are one, Mrs Mould; not that he need do nothing except use you in his most owdacious ways for years to come, I'm sure for young you are and will be. I says to Mrs Harris only t'other day last Monday evening fortnight as ever dawned upon this piligans's progress of a mortal wale, I says to Mrs H. when she says to me, 'Years and their trials sets marks upon us all.' 'Say not the words, Mrs H., if you and me is to be continual friends, for such is not the case. Mrs Mould is one of them as goes agen the observation straight, and never, Mrs H., while I've a drop of breath to draw will I set by and not stand up, don't think it.' 'I ask yer pardon, ma'am,' says Mrs H., 'and I humbly grant your grace, for if ever a woman lived as would see her fellow-creatures into fits to serve her friends, well do I know that woman's name is Sairey Gamp.'"

What does all this amount to? Simply Mrs Gamp's way of telling Mrs Mould that she looked young for her years. Mrs Poyser, had she been disposed to pay any compliment (which is doubtful), would have crystallised her views in a pithy saying, *e.g.*, "Well, Mrs Mould, there seems no such word as autumn in your vocabulary. I reckon you're one o' them evergreens as blooms all the year round."

The distinguishing quality of Dickens's humour is its exuberant prodigality. Fielding is as shrewd in his satire; Goldsmith can equal him in the quaint humanity of his pictures; Thackeray often excels in delicacy of touch; George Eliot in intellectual quality;

but in mere quantity of humour Dickens holds his own against all comers. He deals with us royally, flinging his humour broadcast right and left. Never was there such a literary spendthrift. This it is that gives such astounding vitality to his books, that makes his descriptions glow with startling reality, that carries away the reader even against his own critical judgment. For sheer force and vitality one must, to find an equal, go back to Rabelais. Perhaps he is not impeccable always on matters of taste, but considering the ground he travelled over, the wide field of observation, the wonder is that he rose so well and so often above vulgarities and buffooneries. On the whole, no cleaner, saner humorist ever put pen to paper. In his later books his humour is on the whole less spontaneous, less fertile than in his earlier ones. Roughly speaking, one may say that he reached the zenith of his powers as a humorist in *David Copperfield*. But even this requires some reservation. For there are certain passages in *Bleak House*, *Little Dorrit*, and especially in *Great Expectations*, where he more than compensates for his flagging exuberance in subtlety of treatment and delicacy of touch. An interesting comparison may be made between the description of little Paul and his friends, and that of Pip and his friends. Each of these scenes is excellent in its way, but if we must choose between the two the greater artistic restraint and the fuller humanity of the latter scene should be given the preference. The humour of Dickens expresses itself in three ways:

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(1) In sheer high spirits and breathless caricature. This way, of course, as might be expected, receives its most effective illustration in his earlier days. *Pickwick* and *Nicholas Nickleby* are rich in illustration of farcical writing of the first order. For instance, the downfall of Stiggins, the account of the Eatenswill Election, and the squabble of the editors; and the Trial Scene.

(2) In the second place, his humour expresses itself in satire, when he wished to lash some especial vice or weakness, particularly that of hypocrisy. The pages of Dickens are remarkably rich in illustrations of various grades of hypocrites, the bibulous Stiggins, the fulsome Pumblechook, the inane Sapsea, the cringing Uriah, the oily Chadband, the slimy Casby; but the most brilliant of these is undoubtedly Pecksniff. "Mr Pecksniff was a moral man. Perhaps there never was a more moral man than Mr Pecksniff, especially in his conversation and correspondence. He was a most exemplary man, fuller of virtuous precept than a copy-book. Some people likened him to a direction-post, which is always telling the way to a place and never goes there; but these were his enemies, the shadows cast by his brightness, that was all. His very throat was moral. You saw a good deal of it. You looked over a very low fence of white cravat and there it lay a valley between two jutting heights of collar, serene and whiskerless before you. It seemed to say on the part of Mr Pecksniff, 'There is no deception, ladies and gentlemen, all is peace, a holy calm pervades me.'"

(3) In the third place, his humour expressed itself in fantastic description. He weaves round a subject a series of verbal conceits, and makes an arabesque of the simplest themes. Like Browning he seems irresistibly drawn to the grotesque in art. The description of the Six Jolly Fellowship Porters is wonderfully similar in treatment to such poems as "Up jumped Tokay on our Table" (Browning).

"The Six Jolly Fellowship Porters as a tavern of a dropsical appearance had long settled down into a state of hale infirmity. In its whole constitution it had not a straight floor, and hardly a straight line; but it had outlasted, and clearly would outlast, many a better-trimmed building, many a sprucer public-house. Externally it was a narrow, lopsided wooden jumble of corpulent windows heaped upon one another as you might heap as many toppling oranges, with a crazy wooden verandah impending over the water; indeed, the whole house, inclusive of the complaining flagstaff on the roof, impended over the water, but seemed to have got into the state of a faint-hearted diver who has paused so long on the brink that he will never go in at all" (*Our Mutual Friend*).

Again there is the same love of grotesque fancy in his descriptions of Nature. One recalls the well-known passage of the east wind playing pranks with Toby Veck, or the marvellous picture of the snowstorm in the "Holly Tree Inn." The French critic, Taine, saw in these fantastic touches merely an exhibition of a feverish imagination. It seems to me you might as

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well stigmatise "Childe Roland to the dark tower came" as feverish because of its like predilection for *bizarre* effects. Dickens takes a keen delight in grotesquerie of any kind. He lingers with evident relish over his personal descriptions. Thus he speaks of Hiram Grewgious in *Edwin Drood*.

"He was an arid, sandy man, who, if he had been put into a grinding-mill, looked as if he would have ground immediately into high-dried snuff. He had a scanty, flat crop of hair, in colour and consistency like some very mangy, yellow fur tippet; it was so unlike hair that it must have been a wig, but for the stupendous improbability of anybody's voluntarily sporting such a head. The little play of features that his face presented was cut deep into it in a few hard curves that made it more like work, and he had certain notches on his forehead which looked as though Nature had been about to touch them with sensibility and refinement when she had impatiently thrown away the chisel and said, 'I really cannot be worried to finish off this man; let him go as he is.'"

In considering the pathos of Dickens, those passages for instance which do not admit of any humorous element, one must speak with more reservation. Exaggeration is not fatal to humour; indeed, it is essential to the effectiveness of a satire and is the very bed-rock of farce. But exaggeration is fatal to pathos. It is true that humour and pathos are different ways of looking at the same thing. But it is less easy to command tears than a smile. Pathos is

a more delicate matter than humour. Exaggeration and over-emphasis are its deadly enemies. In real life it is not the hysterical people who move us most. It is the dumb agony, the few broken words of anguish that go to the heart. The deepest pathos of life lies in its eloquent silences, not in its rhetorical tirades; and what affects us in the world about moves us equally in the world of books. In place of those flowery passages—paragraph after paragraph—that follow upon the death of Little Nell, how much more telling would have been a few simple lines? Later on Dickens would never have written like this. In *Dombey* he is more restrained; in *Copperfield* better still. Nothing could be more effective in its unpretentious pathos than the death of Barkis, or the death of Dora. Brevity, restraint, simplicity, these be the three notes wanted to strike the chord of pathos.

Where, however, the scene is one where humour and pathos intermingle Dickens shows his mastery once more. *Great Expectations* is saturated with pathos of this kind—humorous pathos—pathetic humour; where the fancy chuckles and the heart aches, a humour that caresses, a pathos that brightens.

Other instances we may find in the Marshalsea scenes of *Little Dorrit*, and the Christmas books and stories abound in them.

In the forties of the last century, when the first of Dickens's Christmas stories saw the light, there was considerable need of the Christmas spirit; social discontent was rampant everywhere, the country was

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still suffering from the financial drain of the Napoleonic war; the poorer classes were suffering terribly from the evils of the factory system; the flush of poetry and romance which had coloured the horizon some years before had faded away; Carlyle was already fulminating, like some old Hebrew prophet, at the iniquities of the age; the middle classes were apathetic and suspicious; the poorer classes sullen and discontented; a world indeed that needed simple humanity and the sunny cheerfulness of the *Christmas Carol*. Tennyson in his way was no less striving to emphasise the necessity for a brighter outlook, and in those stanzas of "In Memoriam" beginning with "Ring out, wild bells," he also formulated a kind of message of the chimes not without its effect upon his generation. A good many people do not care for poetry, regarding it with Carlyle's friend as "the prodoction of a rude age," whereas the simple domestic story, with the humours and tendernesses of everyday life appeals to every understanding. If one will only compare the multitudinous Christmas stories that are written nowadays with the Christmas tales of Dickens, then one will appreciate more than ever the beauty and moral stimulus of that novelist's work. The feeling that Dickens in his Christmas books did so much to deepen the feeling of kindliness, of universal love, of practical sympathy, is absent from the majority of these volumes written for Christmas time. It may be said that Dickens's Christmas is largely convention, yet it is a convention to which these



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books owe their existence, and the tender, tolerant, generous spirit of Dickens influences few of them. The Christmas message of Dickens, we have been told, is a roast-beef-and-plum-pudding-and-plenty-to-drink message. It was so to this extent only that he recognised that nothing could be hoped for in the way of social uplifting while men and women and little children know what hunger is, that it is cant to talk of the blessings of poverty, or to force a sermon upon an empty stomach.

And thus it is that the Christmas stories of Dickens touch us as do few others, inasmuch as they carry within them the sunshine of a gentle-hearted gaiety. No scene of his so darkly drawn but had its rainbow; and therein lies the compelling charm of stories like *The Carol*, *The Chimes* and *The Cricket on the Hearth*. In fact, Dickens seemed to say, "Feed before you moralise; satisfy the hunger of these poor folk before you try to teach them what to do and what not to do." A simple enough lesson, but one all the same that was badly needed. Too much of the piety of the time was hard and unsympathetic, and one is reminded of the sensible old woman in one of George Eliot's early stories who remarked about the parson's housekeeper, "I have nothing to say agin her piety, my dear, but I know very well I shouldn't like her to cook my vittles. When a man comes in hungry and tired piety won't feed him, I reckon. Hard carrots lie heavy on the stomach, piety or no piety. I called in one day when she was dishing up Mr Tryan's dinner, and I

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could see as his potatoes was as watery as watery. It's right enough to be spiritual, I'm no enemy to that, but I like my potatoes mealy. I don't see as anyone'll get to heaven any the sooner for not digesting their dinners, provided they don't die sooner." And this practical philosophy appealed very strongly to Dickens, and no one has illustrated its truth more picturesquely or more humorously.

Of the Christmas books themselves what shall we say? They are sermons in raisin-stones. He preaches homilies on turkeys, and even extracts a moral from sage and onions. To regard these Christmas stories merely as literary productions, to criticise them exclusively from the artistic standpoint, would be a great mistake; not that they lack power or charm, not that they do not supply considerable poetic fancy and humorous invention. But we have to regard them as primarily instinct with a definite moral purpose. To write with a purpose is always a risky thing; there is so much danger that the writer will sacrifice the humanity of his picture to the special object-lesson he wishes to draw. The only possible thing to justify a writer is success. Dickens's books were, on the whole, a success, and the Christmas books may be described truly, to adopt Thackeray's phrase, as national benefits.

There are some books from which we rise with the knowledge that our souls are the sweeter and saner for what we have read. Little wonder that Charles Lamb should have suggested that a grace might be

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said before certain books. And among such books none have exerted a more compelling influence towards a greater tolerance for men and women, a livelier sympathy for the poor and outcast, than the Christmas stories of Dickens.

### THE PICTORIAL ARTIST

“And a breezy, goose-skinned, red-eyed, stony-toed, tooth-chattering place it was to wait in, in the winter time, as Toby Veck well knew. The wind came tearing round the corner—especially the east wind—as if it had sallied forth express from the confines of the earth to have a blow at Toby. And oftentimes it seemed to come upon him sooner than expected, for turning round the corner and passing Toby, it would suddenly wheel round again as if it cried, ‘Why, here he is.’ Incontinently his little white apron would be caught up over his head, and Toby himself, all aslant, and facing now in this direction, now in that, would be so banged and buffeted, and tousled, and worried and hustled and lifted off his feet, as to render it a state of things but one degree removed from a positive miracle that he wasn’t carried up bodily into the air, as a colony of snails sometimes are, and rained down again, to the great astonishment of the natives in some stray corner of the world where ticket-porters are unknown.”

The playfulness of the wind is a favourite fancy of

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his. Probably many recollect the passage from *Martin Chuzzlewit* of the wind and the dead leaves.

"It was a small tyranny for a respectable wind to go wreaking its vengeance on such poor creatures as the fallen leaves, but this wind, happening to come up with a great heap of them, did so disperse and scatter them that they fled away pell-mell, some here, some there, rolling over each other, whirling round and round upon their thin edges, taking frantic flights into the air and playing all manner of extraordinary gambols in the extremity of their distress. . . . The scared leaves only flew the faster for all this, and a giddy chase it was, for they got into unfrequented places, where there was no outlet, and where the pursuer kept them eddying round and round for his pleasure, and they crept under the eaves of houses and clung tightly to the sides of hay ricks, like bats, and tore in at open chamber windows, and cowered close to hedges, and, in short, went anywhere for safety."

I think that if Dickens had seen a "host of golden daffodils" as Wordsworth did, he would have played with the notion of their ruffled excitability under the influence of the breeze in some such way as he does above, and with this difference, that whereas Wordsworth deduces a moral from them, Dickens extracts an illustration from them.

Wordsworth was a believer in those moods where

"With an eye made quiet by the power of harmony  
And the deep power of joy,  
We see into the heart of things."

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It is doubtful whether "the power of harmony" ever appealed to Dickens. Joy with him was rather a matter of animal exuberance, of humorous cheerfulness. One thing is certain, Nature appealed to him in a very different way from that in which she appealed to poets like Wordsworth, Shelley, Byron or Browning. For Nature apart from man, for Nature in her solitary moods, he has as little care as Tennyson. He could not have sung with Byron:—

"To sit on rocks, to muse o'er flood and fell,  
To slowly trace the forest's shady scene,  
Where things that own not man's dominion dwell,  
And mortal foot had ne'er or rarely been.  
To climb the trackless mountain all unseen  
With the wild flock that never needs a fold,  
Alone o'er steep and foaming falls to lean—  
This is not solitude: 'tis but to hold  
Converse with Nature's charms, and view her stores unroll'd."

This most certainly would have been solitude for Dickens. He was a man of the town, a lover of crowds; one to whom the roar of Fleet Street was as fascinating as the rush of a mountain torrent to Wordsworth. Indeed, he loved the Strand and Fleet Street as dearly as did another Charles. A striking proof of this may be seen in his inability to find inspiration for his books in the most beautiful scenery away from London. Neither Switzerland nor the South of France produced any impression of note, and his letters are full of desire for the noise and bustle of his beloved London. Italy, that was the very breath of life to

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Shelley and Browning, and stimulated the imagination of George Eliot and George Meredith, produced from Dickens one of his least satisfactory books.

Yet he has given us some wonderful pen pictures as backgrounds for his stories, though these scenic descriptions are never drawn for themselves, but, as with Tennyson, to give added emotional colouring to the picture. He uses certain moods of Nature as a kind of *leit-motif* to give dramatic effectiveness to the story. Indeed, his style as a writer is as sensitive as a musician in taking on the mood of the moment. In the striking description of the Essex marshes at the beginning of *Great Expectations*, with its creeping fog and flat loneliness, his language becomes almost a mist of words and phrases. In his description of a coach ride the language quickens and slackens, becomes rollicking or deliberate, according to the pace of the coach. In reading the ride of Tom Pinch to London, one recalls the famous lines in Homer and Virgil, where the sound of the horses' hoofs is imitated in the rhythm. What especially attracts him in Nature is just what we should expect from a man of his temperament—her restless vitality. No writer can depict a storm more graphically. As for the wind, it sweeps through his novels and Christmas stories, whether blustering cheerily through *Pickwick* or wailing through *The Chimes*. Not a novel but has some picturesque passage relating to the wind god in one of his moods. He is always happy in describing any scene full of movement, animation, variety. That

is why he excels in his coach rides. He conveys so admirably the sense of physical exhilaration. His descriptions of journeys from country to town abound in rich observation, but the physical experiences are especially emphasised. Very little is said of those mental states of feeling dear to Thomas Hardy. Egdon Heath would have been little more than a wind-blown ridge to Dickens. There was nothing of the philosopher in his temperament. As a rule, novelists have a preference for the summer-time. But Dickens not only gives the preference to winter, but is far more effective in his winter sketches. Often he describes cold weather with the genial appreciation of a full-blooded man; at other times, perhaps, some early experience inspiring him or the sight of some wretched, shivering beggar, he describes the miseries of the cold with a Dantesque power of imagination. And yet, on examining them, it will be found that these Nature touches are brought in only to round off a scene: a bright frosty morning serves as an excellent set-off to Christmas in the home; a stormy night as a prelude to a murder; the severity of winter heightens the effect of the satire against the Yorkshire schools, and the London fog serves as a convenient symbol for the Court of Chancery.

This brings us to a characteristic of Dickens which to many people seems his most attractive quality as a writer. I mean his faculty for painting forcibly and vividly some dramatic situation. But though a source of strength to him, it is not infrequently a

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source also of weakness. In his earlier books especially, his love of a good situation often leads him to be merely theatrical when he wishes to be dramatic. Thus, that Ainsworthian villain, Monks, in *Oliver Twist*, those "twopenny-coloured" aristocrats in *Nicholas Nickleby*, and even the last moments of little Paul, are theatrical, that is to say, artificial when they should be dramatic and natural. The scene in which Nicholas Nickleby rounds upon Squeers and thrashes him before the school is undoubtedly one that lends itself to dramatic effect, but as described, much of its poignancy is lost by the stageyness of the young man's declamations. "Wretch, touch him again at your peril. I will not stand by and see it done. My blood is up. By Heaven, I will not spare you if you drive me on. . . . My indignation is aggravated by the cruelties practised on helpless infancy." What young fellow would ever have indulged in such stilted, high-flown language? The fact is that Dickens, despite his satires and burlesques of the transpontine drama, had no little sympathy with it, and in his earlier books especially he invariably turns on the limelight when he feels that a situation has arrived. The above speech is not unworthy of Crummles. It is interesting to compare this with the scene between Mr Mell and Steerforth in *David Copperfield*, and note the greater superiority of the latter. *The Tale of Two Cities* belongs by internal evidence to post-*Copperfield* days. There is so much opportunity here for theatrical situations and tawdry effects. Dickens



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could never have written so simply and powerfully in the early days of his career. It is true that one effective scene—that between Miss Pross and Mme. Defarge—loses some of its intensity through an irritating mannerism of the writer, but the concluding scene, hackneyed though it is, between Sidney Carton and the little sempstress, is one of the most powerful, most moving scenes Dickens has given us. It has the elements of genuine drama, simplicity, restraint, dignity.

But, after all, it is as a painter of London life that he excels. For his minute realism and for his phenomenal powers of observation he has been praised on all sides, yet even Walter Bagehot's happy phrase about him that he could describe London "like a special correspondent for posterity" scarcely sums up his unique descriptive power. His retentive memory, his keen perceptions, his genius for minutiae are remarkable enough, certainly, and impress all that he wrote. But more remarkable even than the sights he witnessed and the things he observed is the fantastic imagination that read new and distinctive meanings into what he witnessed and observed. It is not the "special correspondent" in him so much as the humorist in him that gives such vitality to his pictures of London life. Apparently the most objective of writers, he is really intensely subjective, as every great humorist must be. He lulls us by the familiarity of his settings, into the belief that he is a realist. But his realism lies only on the surface, and his pictures of

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London life are magnificent pieces of idealised description, sometimes as fantastic as a passage from *Notre Dame*. With all its mannerisms there is the element of greatness about Dickens's style. For colour, movement and variety it is a remarkable style. Tawdry and mannered at times, if you will, but, despite this, fascinating, arresting, and with the impress of the writer's infectious personality.

The foregoing are a few examples of Dickens's power as a pictorial artist, though it is impossible in this brief paper to give a fitting idea of the wealth and variety of their manifestations. No writer has surpassed Dickens in his vivid and remarkable delineations of London life, and the style he adopts is typical of the man: vivid colouring, restless movement, countless detail, fantastic images, these are the characteristics of Dickens as a prose writer, and the style is the man. Many have imitated him, but have only succeeded in catching the mannerisms, and Dickens's literary style still remains, despite faults and imperfections, among the great styles of the best masters of English prose.

HIS CHARACTER PAINTING

When reading the novels of Dickens I am reminded, curiously enough, of the Pied Piper of Hamelin. I say curiously enough, because at first sight there is no very marked resemblance between the seductive and deceitful magician and the Victorian novelist. One is ready to admit fundamentally the analogy does not hold good. The seductive strains which Dickens plays upon the enchanted instrument of his art do not hold forth illusory promises of comforts and delights, at least none but the confirmed cynic would argue that they did so; but none the less in certain particulars there is a peculiar relationship existing between the Pied Piper and the author of *Copperfield*. We see before us the streets of the city, crowded with ordinary citizens, everything going on in its usual hum-drum way. Into the streets steps the Piper, and to his mouth "lays his pipe of smooth, straight cane." Then there comes a change, the sound of the magic music, and after a moment or so of "the rumbling and grumbling," strange creatures leap out of unsuspected nooks and crannies; the street is crowded with "grotesques" of every variety; no one had suspected their presence there before, but here they are, a strange and uncouth crowd, following the master magician obediently, and filling the air with all sorts of strange sounds. No sooner have they gone from sight than once more is the enchanted instrument

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brought into requisition. There come dulcet sounds, "such soft, sweet notes as e'er musician's cunning never yet gave the enraptured air." Then lo! and behold, a rustling and a bustling, "all the little boys and girls with rosy cheeks and flaxen curls," in short, after the grotesques come the children; for each the music of the Piper has a special significance. Now if we consider the characters of Dickens generally, we shall find that those who stand out with the most vivid significance in our minds are the children and the grotesques. Apart from these there are many successes, many failures, of characterisation, but with these he is uniformly and amazingly successful. There are no failures.

What is our feeling after closing a novel of Dickens—some vital book, such as *Copperfield* or *Great Expectations*? How should we interpret our feelings? Do we feel we have been interested in the history of conflicting motives, of moral and intellectual subtleties, that we have been unravelling the complicated skein of character? We may feel this after putting down *The Mill on the Floss* or *Middlemarch*, not after *Copperfield* or *Great Expectations*. Have we been stirred with some delicate satire of certain social types? Has our fancy been tickled with an elaborate picture of English manners? Again, I think not. This is reserved for us when we read Thackeray; it does not interpret our feelings after reading Dickens. Do we feel we have been in the world of contending passions, of fierce elemental forces? Certainly we feel this

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when closing *Notre Dame* or *Les Misérables*, but this is not our feeling with Dickens. What, then, is the nature of our feelings? We feel that we have been living in some quaint, picturesque world, inhabited by a variety of human beings whose every detail of manner, appearance and dress is impressed upon our memory. We know most of the characters as well as if we had been living with them in the same house and observed them day by day. We remember their favourite tricks of speech, we know what kind of clothes they wore—mostly shabby; how they looked; we can hear the inflection of the voice; in fact, we know as much about the outward man and a little about the inward man as we do about the people to whom we are introduced from time to time, and whose life is necessarily a matter for speculation and guess. Someone shambles along with the remark, "It's of no consequence, thank ye," and we remark, "Here comes Toots." We associate Major Bagstock with being "devilish sly," and Uriah Heep with protestations of 'umbleness. We should know Mr Dorrit by his hemming and humming if nothing else, and by the inflection of his cough we should recognise that Mr Snagsby was in the neighbourhood. Equally sure should we be in the physical details of our acquaintances: the shape of Mr Bagnet's eyebrows, the uniformity of Mr Carker's teeth, the colour of Toby Veck's nose, and of Joe Gargery's whitey-blue eyes, Silas Wegg's wooden leg and the square wooden face of Wemmick. In fact, the entire anatomy and physi-

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ology of Dickens's characters is perfectly plain to us.

Now all this has been made the basis of a strong hostile criticism against the reality of Dickens's creations. It has been said that when not incarnations of certain qualities they are merely puppets with certain tricks and mannerisms, insisted upon in a wearisome manner to distract our attention from the wooden and lifeless character of the people described. Mr Pecksniff, it is said, is hypocrisy personified; Mr Dombey pride personified; Tom Pinch amiability personified; in each case a special quality is so magnified that we lose sight of all other traits and characteristics. The Dickens enthusiast will repel this accusation with indignation, and say that to him at anyrate the characters are emphatically alive. But we must not rest content with mere assertion. Is there any basis of truth in this criticism, and if so, how much is false and how much true? Now it cannot be denied that Dickens has in certain cases rounded off his characters rather in order to point some moral, or to add definiteness to a satire, than to present a reasonable human being. There are a good many Pecksniffs in the world, but who would venture to say that they kept up so persistently the moral pose as does the character in *Martin Chuzzlewit*. Nor does it follow that a Pecksniff must be a man of no intellectual weight whatever. As a matter of fact we know that hypocrisy and ability very often go hand in hand. And although Mr

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Pecksniff's architectural futilities are amusing enough, they detract, we must admit, from the lifelike character of the representation. The fact is, that Dickens has drawn a certain number of satirical portraits which are outside the range of his characterisations at large, and to these cases the adverse criticisms mentioned may with some fairness be applied, not otherwise. For the rest it is not Dickens who has over-stated, but we who fail in our observation. Broadly speaking, the characters of Dickens fall into two main divisions—

1. The normal.
2. The abnormal.

With the first class we can group many of his men, notably the so-called heroes of the story, and the majority of his women and children. The second division may be further sub-divided into—

- (a) Satirical portraits. (Drawn for a special purpose.)
- (b) The villains.
- (c) The grotesques.

The last group mentioned would be sufficient of themselves to refute the criticism that the characters of Dickens are unreal. Few characters in fiction dwell so vividly in our recollection as do these queer, uncouth personages.

Close the novels and go out into the street, and whilst the memory of these portraits is with you, look around at people you meet every day. Why, the world is alive with Dickens's characters; they brush past us in the street, look at us from the pulpit,

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confront us in the city office and in the Law Courts, jostle against us in train and 'bus.

There is a pretty little story by the author of *John Halifax*, where a godmother (what convenient people these fairy godmothers are!) provides a little lame boy with a magic cloak and some magic glasses, whereby the child can sail over all kinds of places, and see all that is going on in the world below. So is it with Dickens. He provides us with the cloak and the glasses, and with these glasses even the streets, and the people whom we talk to and thought we were familiar with, reveal a new significance. More than this, although he takes us into all kinds of dark places, yet the magic cloak keeps us far enough above the earth, and we see down through the clouds and mist, being ourselves in the bright, invigorating atmosphere of his humour and tenderness.

But it is time now for us to descend from generalisation to a more detailed study of the character painting.

First, the normal characters.

I take these first because here, with certain exceptions, Dickens is the least happy and the least individual. He has a genius for transforming geese into swans, for pointing out the possibilities of ugly ducklings. He can make you a silk purse of a sow's ear, or a tolerable imitation thereof, and discover a gleam of gold in the most unpromising soil. Nevertheless—putting aside the children—some eccentricity of manner, some mental twist, some intellectual slowness is required by him in order to obtain the fullest effects of his art. With the average young



man and young woman, and with people who have nothing superficially to differentiate them, he is less interested, and seems rather at a loss how to treat them. How shadowy are Martin Chuzzlewit, Nicholas Nickleby and Walter Gay compared with Tom Pinch, Newman Noggs and Captain Cuttle. Why is this? Partly, no doubt, because these characters are less adapted to his methods of character delineation; they make no call upon his sense of humour, nor do they arouse his satirical purpose. Partly also because Dickens does not concern himself with the spiritual history of men and women; and here an interesting contrast is afforded by the writings of George Eliot. Her method of character study is precisely the reverse of Dickens's. Dickens treats of his characters primarily from without, and only such characteristics as may express themselves externally are dwelt upon by him. George Eliot conducts you within; she is first and foremost anxious to show you the growth and expansion of the inward man or woman—that something we call the soul. It is only secondarily, and even that not always, that she is concerned with the externals of her characters. Dickens was not a scientific student of character; he was a shrewd observer of certain types of character, and although he did not confine his character studies altogether to these types, yet he was rarely successful when he diverged from them.

Physical beauty did not appeal strongly to Dickens as it did to Thackeray. As a novelist and a senti-

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mentalist he was bound to pay some homage at the shrine of feminine grace and charm; but his description of such strikes the reader as strained and artificial. Compare the strained sentimentality of his picture of Ruth Pinch, meant to convey her personal attractiveness, with that of George Eliot's convincing description of Hetty Sorrel's beauty. He could convey many things with his picturesque and powerful pen, but the subtle charm of sex was not among them.

The tragedy of sensitive, ill-used children is a tragedy that Dickens could draw with force, tenderness and imaginative insight; but the tragedy of love, the tragedy of pitiful passions, of futile affections, the tragedy of Juliet, of Maggie Tulliver, of Tess of the D'Urbervilles, is outside his range altogether. Estella is little more than a youthful edition of Edith Dombey. She has been brought up by Miss Havisham (another of Dickens's failures) to look with contempt on affection and sentiment. She is drilled into a hard, cynical young woman, who breaks hearts as a pastime. The beautiful woman without a heart is common enough in fiction, but never was anyone more devoid of semblance to humanity than Estella. She does not talk like a creature of flesh and blood, but as a personified theory.

Pip, deeply in love with her, tells her of his feelings.

"It seems," said Estella, very calmly, "that there are sentiments and fancies—I don't know how to call them—which I am not able to comprehend. When you say you love me I know what you mean, as a form of words, but nothing more; you address nothing in

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my heart; you touch nothing there. I don't care for what you say at all."

Is this the language of a cynical young woman, or, indeed, of any young woman?

With another type of woman Dickens is far more successful. With women past their first youth, who are eccentric in their ways, who have little or no physical charm and often no mental brilliance, yet who have a certain soundness and sweetness of heart, with women of this type Dickens is extraordinarily happy. And although these fall within the grotesque group they may be considered here while dealing with the women. Of this class Betsey Trotwood, Miss La Creevy and Miss Pross may be cited as noteworthy examples. Betsey Trotwood is easily first; indeed, she ranks among one of Dickens's unqualified successes, and from the moment when she administers the strange mixture of restoratives to her young nephew ("I am sure I tasted linseed water, anchovy sauce and salad dressing") to her kindly hints to David about Agnes, almost at the end of the book, she attracts us to her; what a dear, golden-hearted old lady she must have made, her little peculiarities and occasional acerbity just giving an agreeable fillip to her sterling qualities. Long may her type exist to sweeten human life and to help the many Mr Dicks floating about the world!

With another class of woman also Dickens was no less successful. It is a class calling rather for shrewd observation than for psychological analysis, and therefore well within his range. This type is drawn

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almost entirely from the lower middle-class, and have one attribute at anyrate in common—thorough-going disagreeableness—Mrs Gamp, Mrs Prig, Mrs Joe, Mrs Snagsby, Mrs Varden, Mrs Sowerberry, Mrs Gummidge, Miss Miggs, Mrs MacStinger, Mrs Jellyby and Mrs Pocket, to mention a few. What a detestable collection of females; what an unpromising assortment of minor vices! Yes, minor vices; they haven't enough character to be even vicious on a big scale. Yet with what amazing art they are drawn, not a repulsive feature missed, and yet etched in with such humorous twists and twirls that you cannot help laughing at them, however foolish or contemptible they may be. Of the London landlady no one had a wider knowledge than Dickens; it is amazing the varieties he gives you of a type which one would have thought admitted of so few. Mrs Bardell belongs, perhaps, to the region of farcical romance; but there is enough life about Mrs Raddles—too much for poor Bob Sawyer. Mrs Crupp is painfully actual; she “does for” David Copperfield, and it would be hard to compute the number of unfortunate young men she had “done for” very completely. Mrs Todgers, who would probably have objected to be classed as a landlady, has some good points. She is by no means altogether the calculating vixen—at the same time one would like to see her—only at rare intervals. Mrs Lirriper, who gives the name to one of his short stories, is the most human, and perhaps it is unfair to class her among the disagreeables; but

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we fancy she would rather get on the "nerves," her kindness notwithstanding.

Taken on the whole then we must pronounce Dickens's women characters as ineffective, except where they are either eccentric or disagreeable. Accepting these qualifications, he has contributed some remarkably humorous and not a few genuinely pathetic figures to the world of noveldom; two at anyrate destined to rank among the immortals of fiction—Mrs Gamp and Betsey Trotwood.

It is hard to overpraise Dickens's sketches of child life. Dickens did not describe a child—he became a child for the time being. He lived over again his own childish days. Hence the poignancy and actuality of his pictures. Perhaps on occasion his sentimentalism and his love for a "curtain," as in the death-scene of Pip and Joe the crossing-sweeper, leads him to utter a false note or so. But the false notes are very rare. And the beauty, imaginative delicacy, and tender humour, of his pictures of child life need no encomium at this date. The merits of his three notable studies of sensitive, nervous childhood, Paul, David and Pip, are universally recognised. Here obviously his own temperament is speaking. But he was also extremely happy in describing children and young people of other temperaments than his own. There is Robin Toodle, the robustious offspring of the nurse in *Dombey and Son*; Noah Claypole, the loutish charity boy, is another type; Joe, the crossing-sweeper, is a typical little Cockneylad;

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Traddles and Steerforth as boys at school are admirable studies in contrast. How lifelike is this description :—

“ Poor Traddles in a tight, sky-blue suit that made his arms and legs like German sausages, he was the merriest and most miserable of all the boys. He was always being caned—I think he was caned every day, except on holiday Monday, when he was only ruled on both hands, and was always going to write to his uncle about it, and never did. After laying his head on the desk for a little while he would cheer up somehow, begin to laugh again and draw skeletons all over his slate before his eyes were dry. I used to wonder what comfort Traddles found in drawing skeletons, and for some time looked upon him as a sort of hermit, who reminded himself by those symbols of mortality that caning couldn't last for ever, but I believe he only did it because they were easy and didn't want any features.”

In his Christmas story, *The Haunted Man*, there are some spirited sketches of the small Titterbys; of Dolphus, a newspaper boy, *ætat* ten, who hit upon the brilliant invention of varying the first vowel in the word, “ paper,” and thus imparting a colour and interest in the day's routine. So before daylight he would yell “ morning pa-per,” an hour before noon “ morning pap-per,” which about two changed to “ morning pip-per,” which in a couple of hours changed to “ morning popper,” and so declined with the sun into “ evening pup-per,” to the great relief and comfort of this young gentleman's spirits.

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Who can readily forget, moreover, the amusingly precocious children in the "Holly Tree Inn" story, a story abounding in touches of sympathetic observation of children's ways. But no doubt the most enduring of his sketches of precocious children is the poor little half-starved slavey in *The Old Curiosity Shop*, a far more vital study than poor Little Nell. The curious mixture of worldly shrewdness and child-like sweetness is admirably suggested. Almost driven insane through ill-treatment, a natural strain of goodness survives the ill-treatment of Sally Brass. The scenes between Dick Swiveller and the Marchioness are the most delightful and the most enduring in this novel, though we cannot agree with Mr Swiveller that Sophronia Sphynx, albeit "euphonious and genteel," was a name worthy of her.

To pass from the normal to the abnormal is to pass at once from a group of characterisations which greatly vary in merit to a group that—with a few reservations concerning the bold, bad villains—are uniformly and extraordinarily successful. It is to pass from a territory, in which other writers of less power have succeeded often much better than our author, to a little domain of which Dickens is the master and ruler; in which he is unapproachable.

Never alone come the eccentrics! The bad characters—the out-and-out bad characters—succeed just where we should expect them to succeed, and fail where we should expect them to fail. Where they present merely studies in coarse brutality, animal

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ferocity combined with the intelligence of the "rough" or "cad," they are effective enough. The cowardice of the "bully," the savage anger and treachery of the blackguard, is excellently depicted. Sykes and Fagin, Jonas Chuzzlewit, and, on the whole, Quilp, serve their purpose well enough. But not every devil may be detected by his cloven foot, nor every villain by his scowl. Yet unless Dickens could show some physical manifestation of the soul, could hint by a deformity of limb the deformity of moral fibre, he was unable to impress the reader with the personality of the character. Carker's villainy seems so inseparably bound up with his gleaming white teeth, that we are almost persuaded that were he to become on a sudden toothless he would *ipso facto* develop into a highly virtuous gentleman. He suggests a study in molars and morals!

Dickens is, as has been said, in no sense a psychologist. His work is impressionistic, not analytical. When he elaborates his portrait, it is not to show the quality of motives so much as the quantity of waistcoat buttons. Such as they are, however, the villains as a rule serve their purpose well, and where they fail, as in the case of Carker, Monk, Eugene Wrayburn and Uriah Heep, it is because some psychological insight into the workings of the mind is wanted to give vitality and reality to the picture.

To turn now to the class of grotesques which play the most conspicuous share in his writings. Here physical uncouthness and mental disability, ranging from good-natured stupidity down to sheer imbecility,



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is shown combined with sterling moral qualities—in particular, tenderness and sympathy. The recipe for the characters is not especially promising, and one would surmise that they would quickly weary. This, however, is certainly not the case. From Newman Noggs, who appeared in *Nickleby*, down to Joe Gargery in *Great Expectations*, each creation is a fresh delight, each has some new and unexpected touch of humour, and with none of them would we part. Some are lovable, some are merely amusing, but all of them are creatures of warm flesh and blood to be reckoned among the friends of our imagination.

And here let me say that by the phrase abnormal I do not mean unnatural or necessarily cranky—though some are cranks—but characters removed from the ordinary average human being by reason of certain peculiarities or eccentricities of temperament. Joe Gargery is not the normal blacksmith; he is abnormal, luckily for us, and his oddities are irradiated by the searchlight of the author's penetrating humour. Yet he is perfectly natural; we may never have met Joe, but we feel we might meet him at any moment. He is a genuine creation.

“Joe being invited to sit down to table, looked all round the room for a suitable spot on which to deposit his hat, as if it were only on some few very rare substances in nature that it could find a resting-place, and ultimately stood it on an extreme corner of the chimneypiece, from which it ever afterwards fell off at intervals.

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“ ‘Do you like tea or coffee, Mr Gargery?’ asked Herbert.

“ ‘Thankee, sir,’ said Joe, stiff from head to foot, ‘I’ll take whichever is most agreeable to yourself.’

“ ‘What do you say to coffee?’

“ ‘Thankee, sir,’ returned Joe, evidently dispirited by the proposal; ‘since you *are* so kind as to make choice of coffee, I will not run contrary to your opinions. But don’t you never find it a little ‘eating?’

“ ‘Say tea, then,’ said Herbert, pouring it out.

“ ‘Here Joe’s hat tumbled off the mantelpiece and he started out of his chair, and fitted it to the same exact spot, as if it were an absolute point of good breeding that it should tumble off again soon.

“ ‘When did you come to town, Mr Gargery?’

“ ‘Were it yesterday afternoon?’ said Joe, after coughing behind his hand as if he had had time to catch the whooping cough since he came. ‘No, it were not, yes it were. Yes, it were yesterday afternoon’ (with an appearance of mingled wisdom, relief and strict impartiality).

“ ‘Have you seen anything of London yet?

“ ‘Why, yes, sir,’ said Joe. ‘Me and Wopsle went off straight to look at the Blacking Ware’us. But we didn’t find it come up with its likeness to the red bills on shop doors; which I mean to say,’ added Joe, ‘as it is there drawd too architectooralororal.’

“ ‘I really believe Joe would have prolonged the word (mightily expressive to my mind of some architecture that I know) into a perfect chorus, but for his

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attention being providentially attracted by his hat, which was toppling. Indeed, it demanded from him a constant attention and a quickness of eye and hand very like that exacted by wicket keeping. He made extraordinary play with it, and showed the greatest skill—now rushing at it and catching it neatly as it dropped; now merely stopping it midway, beating it up, and humouring it in various parts of the room, and against a good deal of the pattern of the wall, finally splashing it into the slop basin, where I took the liberty of laying hands on it.”

Apart from the perfect touches of characterisation, what a genius for “stage business” this and similar passages show. One can well believe how excellent an actor Dickens was.

On similar lines, though not with such delicacy of touch or such play of humorous fancy, is the character of Mr Peggotty drawn. Peggotty loses in interest somehow when he goes in quest of Emily, whereas Joe grows upon us as the story proceeds, and is perhaps the most lovable of all Dickens’s characters, the strength and tenderness of the man being portrayed with infinite skill.

Excellent as studies of trustful simplicity are the characters of Tom Pinch and his first cousin, Bob Cratchit, who idealises Scrooge in a way not altogether dissimilar from that of Pinch!

Belonging, of course, to these grotesques are certain female characters we have glanced at already when dealing with Dickens’s women: Betsey Trotwood,

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Miss Pross, Mrs Gamp, Betsey Prig. It is curious how sure is his touch and effective his portraiture when grotesquerie, involving some measure of humorous fantasy, enter into the character. Putting aside the shrewd and crazy women, he scarcely ever draws a live woman except as a grotesque. Among the male characters also, many of his most striking successes are grotesques, but he has drawn some interesting portraits apart from these, *e.g.*, Pip, Steerforth, Traddles, Jaggers, Tulkinghorn, and for the matter of that, the majority of his lawyers. Two, however, of his most notable paintings must be classed with the "grotesques," even though, as in the case of Joe and Mr Peggotty, the grotesque element only faintly colours the portrait and does not interfere with its life-like character. I allude to Dick Swiveller and Mr Micawber. Stripped of their engaging personalities and looked at through the cold eye of criticism, it is difficult to see anything especially attractive about them. Dick is a chronic tippler, rarely sober, a shiftless Bohemian, alternating between getting into drink and into debt

Surely a man who might be held up as an awful example by the temperance party, yet as seen by the humorous and sympathetic eye of Dickens his failings fall into insignificance, even his intemperance is presented in a merry, fantastic light; whereas the good-heartedness of the character and the happy-go-lucky mercurial temperament is emphasised and dwelt upon with rare skill. We are made to feel that

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there is a refinement about the man, that he is not only a "good sort" at heart, but that under happier circumstances "the fire of soul would have been kindled at the taper of conviviality" of a more moderate character.

Mr Micawber is another type of the attractive mercurial temperament, ready to look on the bright side of things at the smallest provocation. Apart from this, the needy, improvident man would have served the stern moralist's purposes almost as well as Swiveller. But really we are scarcely conscious of his faults, so delighted are we by his company. This, it may be said, is due to the author making unfair use of his gift of humour, and idealising the man out of all human probability. That he idealises may be admitted. All his characters are idealised one way or the other. That is part of his method. That it is done to an inartistic extent, that it deprives the character of human interest we cannot admit. Surely we can recall many persons whose charm of manner or whose personal magnetism has affected us so strongly that we have been inclined to overlook their weaknesses and condone their faults, faults that in less sympathetic or attractive characters would have provoked disgust and disapprobation.

Here comes in the special and most enduring value of Dickens's character-painting. So sure is his touch, so vital his imagination, that the credibility or psychologic accuracy of a character study scarcely affects its success at all. Some of his frankest caricatures

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live with us, as do few of the correctly-drawn personages of other novelists. So intensely does he believe in Pecksniff, Stiggins, Chadband, Scrooge, ay, and his Winkles and Tupmans too, that we also are compelled to believe in them. The reformed Scrooge screaming out of the window for the largest turkey, or digging the astonished Cratchit in the ribs, is outrageously improbable. But, improbable or not, Scrooge is alive and declines to be dismissed into the limbo of forgotten worthies. And are not many of Dickens's characterisations wrought into the very texture of our thoughts, impressed upon our imagination as are few characters even in real life?

Artistic defects (though these I think have been exaggerated) count for little where there is such splendid, superabundant vitality.

For beneath all his caricature, his fantasy, there is the same elemental force and zest for life that one finds in Walt Whitman, and what Whitman did for poetry Dickens did for the fiction of his day—humanised it, democratised it, energised it.

"Fellowship is Heaven, lack of fellowship is Hell," wrote William Morris, and if there is any one idea underlying the multifarious characterisations of Charles Dickens, it is this idea of the supreme value of fellowship which transfigures the meanest, the most dull-witted personages into saints and heroes.

Betsey Trotwood's famous advice to her nephew fairly epitomises the teaching of Dickens. "Never be mean, never be false, never be cruel." "Never be

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mean," that is the burden of his Christmas books. "Never be false," that sentiment runs beneath all his satire. "Never be cruel," that is the mainspring of his tender humour—his compassion for the weak, the infirm, the oppressed.





## THE VAGABOND

“ Before men made us citizens, great  
Nature made us men.”

LOWELL.

## WILLIAM HAZLITT

WEDNESDAY evening in Inner Temple Lane, a dingy room with low ceiling and a scarcity of furniture. Books and old prints look upon the intruder with sedate and watchful eyes. An atmosphere of musty antiquity and tobacco smoke. On the sideboard there is a cold joint of beef, and beside it a big jug of porter, from which guests may refresh themselves at will.

Beside the fireplace towers the corpulent but imposing figure of Coleridge. He is talking rapidly in his rich, sonorous voice to an attentive circle of listeners, his blue eye flashing with inspiration and enthusiasm as he warms to his subject. Beside him is a stiff, angular figure clad in grey worsted, half listening, half meditating—need we specify him as *the* poet of Rydal Mount? The host—Charles Lamb—a little man with a big head and a sly, whimsical expression, stands at some distance from the other, interjecting some humorous comment on his friend's outpouring. Leaning against the wall is Hazlitt, a man of middle height, with dark hair curling over his forehead, quick restless eyes, and somewhat defiant expression. A little man with a sallow-looking visage, bright eyes and an exquisitely musical voice, breaks in upon the

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conversation at times, and is listened to with an attention scarcely less rapt than that accorded to Coleridge. This is Thomas de Quincey, and Hazlitt and he vie with each other in shabbiness of attire. A remarkable gathering, truly, of genius and Bohemianism. But while several of the gathering had a strain of wildness in them none were so unmistakably vagabonds of literature as Hazlitt and De Quincey. Lamb and Hazlitt are often bracketed together as literary Bohemians, but Lamb's Bohemianism was quite on the surface. He was at heart devoted to convention, and when released from his drudgery of clerkship he has frankly confessed how potent an influence routine had been and still was in his life. Even his wanderings on paper are more apparent than real, and there is a method in his quaintest fantasies. But Hazlitt was a vagabond, a wanderer in the fullest sense, and there was something of the untamed about both him and De Quincey. Two extraordinary interesting personalities in an age of interesting personalities.

Wordsworth claimed for imaginative vision an inner veracity, a power of penetrating to the root of things, but it was Coleridge who first appropriated this faculty of the imagination for critical purposes. Thus he made criticism, no less than poetry, a creative art.

Hazlitt was his lineal successor in criticism just as Frederick Denison Maurice was in theological thought, and if not so great in insight, yet transcended his master in lucidity and brilliance. Criticism in the eighteenth century had been for the most part hard

and mechanical; the cold light of logic and reason according to the ideals of the time was considered a sufficient equipment. And so we find Dr Johnson airily disposing of Lycidas as "easy, vulgar and therefore disgusting"; Lord Lansdowne declining to discuss Shakespeare's soliloquies on the ground that "not one in all his works could be excused by Reason or Nature." Sometimes a critic was kindly enough to attempt to improve the poor Elizabethan. Dryden assisted to give symmetry to the *Tempest* by devising as a mate for Miranda a man who had never seen a maid. Pope was offended by Shakespeare's "wrong choice of subjects," and charitably concludes that it was due to the fact that he was dependent for his subsistence on pleasing the taste of tradesmen and mechanics.

But at the close of the century a revolution took place in critical as in other regions of thought. Lessing led the way in Germany, followed by Coleridge in England. And the method of this new school was to interpret, to sympathetically identify oneself with the author, learn his secrets and unfold them. This needs a more than common strength and plasticity of imagination, but in the hands of masters like Goethe, Schlegel, Lessing, Victor Hugo, Coleridge, Hazlitt and Lamb, wonders were accomplished. Each stood by himself in outlook and predilections, one excelling where another failed, but each carried the freshness and eagerness of the ardent imagination into their work.

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Lamb, of course, is far better known to the general reader than Hazlitt. Like Dickens, "the gentle Charles" is a household word, whereas Hazlitt is little more than a name in a catalogue to many. Yet as a critic it may be doubted whether Lamb is any better known than Hazlitt. Lamb's fame as the whimsical Elia, his picturesque personality and his charming extravagances as a letter-writer, have somewhat obscured his reputation as the author of *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets Contemporary with Shakespeare*, yet it must not be forgotten that with his fine literary epicureanism he re-discovered the old dramatic poets, and opened up a new world to future scholars and *litterateurs*. Hazlitt, more wayward and capricious in his tastes, is not so safe a guide as Lamb, but where he enjoyed and appreciated no man could better convey this enjoyment to others. And even better than his literary portraits with all their daring brilliance are his essays on men and things, which for discursive wisdom and freshness of thought almost equal those of Montaigne. As Hazlitt truly said, Montaigne is the pioneer of this style of essay writing, being the first who had the courage to say as an author what he felt as a man.

Although in later life Hazlitt's strange humours and bursts of petty feeling made him difficult to get on with and proved very trying to his friends, yet in earlier days—before ill-health had soured his temper and vicissitudes of fortune made him bitter—he was a youth of singular charm. Silent and reserved with

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strangers, he was a most delightful conversationalist to those whom he cared for, abounding in enthusiasm and quick to respond to the enthusiasm of others. Lacking Coleridge's remarkable powers of expression, he was far more intelligible and more amenable to suggestions from others. No one could be fairer in argument than he, though at times, when he sat down to write—as when dealing with Byron—personal prejudices would carry away his cooler judgment.

At this time he was an itinerant young portrait painter with a taste for philosophy. But dissatisfied with his artistic power, he turned his attention more assiduously to philosophy and politics. He seems to have been a clever painter without the patience to master properly the career of his art. Like some of his literary portraits, however, at a later date, his paintings were often more dashing than recognisable. Southey thought that the portrait of Coleridge resembled "a horse-stealer on his trial, evidently guilty, but clever enough to have a chance of getting off." Many were mere pot-boilers, and were chiefly valuable as providing him with a little ready cash. On one occasion, we are told, he hurried over the portrait of a rich manufacturer in desperate anxiety to pocket the five guineas, and after achieving his end, hurried away to dine on sausages and mashed potatoes. "While they were getting ready," he says, "and I could hear them hissing in the pan, I read a volume of *Gil Blas*, containing an account of the fair Aurora."

But if he gave up the brush he never gave up paint-

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ing, and his brilliant audacities in prose have survived his experiments in pigment.

Shy and reserved as he was, no one could be more confidential with a pen in hand. Every essay is a fragment of autobiography and every sentence a confession. There is something of Rousseau's sentimental garrulousness about Hazlitt, and this increases the human interest of his writings. We may dissent from his conclusions, or take exception to certain moods, but he never bores us.

As examples of his powers of portraiture a passage or so from his papers on Wordsworth and Tom Moore will suffice. Here we shall find mingled honey and gall.

What could be better than the eulogism of Wordsworth, "He gathers manna in the wilderness, he strikes the barren rock for the gushing moisture. He elevates the mean by the strength of his own aspirations; he clothes the naked with beauty and grandeur from the stores of his own recollections. No cypress grove loads his verse with funeral song, but his imagination lends a sense of joy

" 'To the bare trees and mountains bare,  
And grass in the green fields.'

No storm, no shipwreck, startles us by its horrors, but the rainbow lifts its head in the clouds and the breeze sighs through the withered fern. No sad vicissitude of Fate, no overwhelming catastrophe in Nature deforms his page; but the dewdrop glitters



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on the bending flower, the tear collects in the glistening eye. As the lark ascends from its low bed and salutes the morning skies, so Mr Wordsworth's unpretending muse in russet guise scales the summit of reflection, while it makes the round earth its footstool and its home."

But the man who wrote these honeyed words could write also words of gall, as that genial but certainly second-rate poet, Tom Moore, found to his cost. It would be hard to deny the truth of the criticism, despite its almost brutal frankness.

"Mr Moore has a little mistaken the art of poetry for the cosmetic art. He makes out an inventory of beauty, the smile on the lips, the dimple on the cheeks, item golden locks, item a pair of blue wings, and thinks it a character and story. This dissipated, fulsome, painted patchwork style may succeed in the levity and languor of the boudoir, but it is not the style of Parnassus, nor a passport to immortality. We cannot except the Irish melodies from the same criticism. If these national airs do indeed express the soul of impassioned feeling in his countrymen, the case of Ireland is hopeless. There are no tones to waken liberty, to console humanity. Mr Moore converts the wild harp of Erin into a musical snuff-box."

While lacking the profound sagacity of his master Coleridge—Coleridge at his best—the Coleridge of the "Essay on Poetry" and the commentator on Shakespeare, he far excels him in lucidity of expression and in range of subject.

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More interesting, however, than these clever portraits are his *Miscellaneous Essays* and *Table Talk*, as they enable the writer better to display his wit, fancy and originality of thought. How profoundly suggestive is his essay on "Cant and Hypocrisy." The following fragment may convey some idea of the line of thought, but the essay must be read in its entirety to be fairly appreciated.

"We often see that a person condemns in another the very thing he is guilty of himself. Is this hypocrisy? Not necessarily [is Hazlitt's reply]. If he really feels none of the disgust and abhorrence he expresses, this is quackery and impudence. But if he really expresses what he feels then this is not hypocrisy, but want of strength in the moral sense. All morality consists in squaring one's actions and sentiments to one's ideas of what is fit and proper, and it is the incessant struggle and alternate triumph of the two principles that is one great source of all the good and evil in the world. The mind of man is like a clock that is always running down and requires to be as constantly wound up. The ideal principle is the master key that winds it up, and without which it will come to a stand. A man is only a thorough hypocrite when he has not even the wish to be what he appears. Anyone may yield to temptation and yet feel a sincere love and aspiration after virtue. The hypocrisy of priests has been a butt for ridicule in all ages, but I am not sure that there has not been more wit than philosophy in it. I cannot admit that

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though he may exaggerate or even make an ostentatious display of religion and virtue through habit and spiritual pride, that this is a proof he has not those sentiments in his heart, or that his whole behaviour is the mere acting of a part. One of the finest remarks that has been made in modern times is that of Lord Shaftesbury, that there is no such thing as a perfect Theist or an absolute Atheist, that whatever may be the general conviction entertained on the subject the evidence is not, and cannot be at all times equally present to the mind; that, even if it were, we are not in the same humour to perceive it; a fit of gout, a shower of rain shake our best-established conclusions. The grossnesses of religion and its stickling for mere forms as its essence have given a handle, and a just one, to impugnors. At the Feast of Ramadan, says Voltaire, the Mussulmans wash and pray five times a day, and then fall to cutting one another's throats again with the greatest deliberation and goodwill. The two things, I grant, are sufficiently at variance, but they are, I contend, equally sincere in both. Thus, though I think there is very little downright hypocrisy in the world, I do think there is a good deal of cant. Though few people have the face to set up for the very thing they in their hearts despise, we almost all want to be thought better than we are, and affect a greater admiration or abhorrence of certain things than we really feel. Cant is the voluntary overcharging or prolongation of a real sentiment; hypocrisy is the setting up a pretension to

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a feeling you never had and have no wish for. There are people who are made up of cant, but who have not sincerity enough to be hypocrites, that is, have not hearty dislike or contempt enough of anything to give the lie to their puling profession of admiration and esteem for it."

Again. What could be truer in substance and more striking in treatment than this, from another essay on *Vulgarity and Affectation*

"A thing is not vulgar merely because it is common. Nothing is vulgar that is natural, spontaneous, unavoidable. Grossness is not vulgarity, ignorance is not vulgarity, awkwardness is not vulgarity; but all these become vulgar when they are affected and shown off on the authority of others, or to fall in with the fashion or the company we keep. Caliban is coarse enough, but surely he is not vulgar. Nothing original, nothing real can be vulgar. The upper are not wiser than the lower orders, because they resolve to differ from them. The fashionable have the advantage of the unfashionable in nothing but the fashion. The truly vulgar are the herd of pretenders to what they do not feel, and to what is not natural to them, whether in high or low life."

His habit of introducing personal matter into his essays gives frequently a pleasant intimate flavour to his writing, and your interest in the written matter is none the less because of the interesting glimpses afforded of the writer's personality.

He will tell you with gleeful particularity of detail

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the exact circumstances in which he first made the acquaintance of certain books.

He will recall how he sat up half the night to read *Paul and Virginia*, which he picked up at an inn at Bridgewater, after being drenched in the rain all day; he mentions how he sat down to read Rousseau at the inn at Llangollen, over a bottle of sherry and cold chicken. In a beautiful passage he describes the time when he walked between Wrexham and Llangollen, his imagination aglow with some lines of Coleridge, and says that ever after the beauty of the hill-girt valley was inseparably connected in his mind with the glamour of Coleridge's verse and his own tumultuous, revolutionary sympathies. This walk in North Wales seems to have been to him what that Cambrian walk was to Wordsworth—a time of rapture and consecration.

In his essay on "The Conversation of Authors," he takes a look out of a window first, tells us what he sees, and uses his comments as tags to moralise on, or as fresh illustrations for some theory he is elaborating. In another essay the sight of a spider crawling along the floor furnishes the preamble. In another a thunder-storm suggests an analogy with his own explosive moods. At another time he tells you he is looking forward to pastry for dinner. At another time he changes from one place to another whilst writing an essay. The new environment suggests a flow of fresh ideas, ideas that frankly bear little relation to the matter preceding. No matter, Hazlitt resolved

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to let his subject suffer rather than himself. He has a fresh fund of new ideas and means to bring them in somehow. And so we get a big digression, fascinating but discursive to a degree. Dearly as he valued the warmth and colour of life there was more than a touch of the recluse about him, and he was the reverse of a sociable man, rarely showing his qualities of mind to any but one or two chosen souls. "One of the pleasantest things in life," he says, "is going on a journey, but I like to go by myself. I cannot see the wit of walking and talking at the same time. When I am in the country I wish to vegetate like the country. I am not for criticising hedgerows and black cattle. I go out of town to forget the town and all that is in it. There are those who for this purpose go to watering-places and carry the metropolis with them. I like more elbow room and fewer encumbrances. Give me the clear blue sky over my head and the green turf beneath my feet, a winding road before me, and a three hours' march to dinner, and then to thinking." This is the Hazlitt that captivated Stevenson, the delightful gossip whose influence is so marked in many of Stevenson's graceful essays.

With all his love of philosophy and serious thought he hated the man who never relaxes. There is no starch in Hazlitt's writings. Says he, "I hate to be always wise or aiming at wisdom. I do not desire to be always posing myself and others with the questions of fate, free-will, fore-knowledge absolute, etc. I must occasionally lie fallow. Give a man a

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tongue in his head, a throb of pleasure in his heart, and he will be glad to share it with the first person he meets."

There was something of the Mrs Gummidge about him. His friends were many, but he liked to feel he was unbefriended. It gave a relish to his solitary moods. Yet he was good and modest at heart, and when on one occasion the urbane Leigh Hunt gave him a piece of his own mind quite in the Hazlitt vein, all he said was, "By Gad, there's a great deal in what you say."

Hazlitt belonged to the race of splendid vagabonds. There are certain men born with a gipsy strain in the blood, a certain restless itch of temperament which places them naturally in the position of revolvers. Like the proverbial Irishman they are "agin the government," no matter what government. They are spiritual—even when not physical—wanderers over the face of the earth, chafing against the mildest conventions of society, with something of the elemental wildness of the ancient earth about them. This masonic sign of vagabondage places in the same spiritual fraternity men as different in genius and disposition as Thoreau, Whitman, Hazlitt, De Quincey, Borrow and Richard Jeffries. It drove Thoreau to the woods at Maine, sent Whitman chanting his blithe and uncouth songs along "the Open Road," attracted Borrow to those aliens from civilisation, the gipsies, and made Jeffries far more at home listening to the song of the bird in the

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hedgerows of Sussex than conversing with his fellow-men.

Excepting Whitman, a kind of anti-social sentiment animates the vagabond; he is on closer terms of intimacy with the birds and flowers than with his kind, and even the hearty brotherliness of Whitman has in it the rough friendliness of wind and sun. He loves every man and woman, but no man or woman in particular. He loves them in so far as they are part of Nature, but there is little that is personal in his attachments.

Hazlitt, of course, was a fervent republican, he was also a devoted admirer of Napoleon. Some have professed to see an inconsistency here. But the republican surely by virtue of his dislike for artificial aristocracies is drawn naturally towards the aristocracy of genius wherever he may find it

Hazlitt attacked Byron because he fancied, unfairly, his revolt was a pose; but the two men had much in common. Hazlitt is the Byron of prose. There is the same immense vitality in the *Table Talk* and *Spirit of the Age*, the same changeableness of mood, the same salt of humour, sting of satire, and something of the same strange mixture of idealist and cynical man of the world, as we see in *Beppo* and *Don Juan*. And beneath all their wilfulness each was a great man at heart. Down below all Byron's affectation and mannerism lay a strain of almost fierce sincerity. Shelley discerned it when others did not; just as Charles Lamb, with his unerring insight, never failed



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to see the finer side of Hazlitt. He declared that Hazlitt in a natural and healthy state was the finest and wisest of spirits breathing. Unhappily, in the last few years of his life it could hardly be said that Hazlitt ever was in a natural and healthy state. And yet he was not a miserable man. The vagabond is never really miserable. He may rave and growl, but there's a suppressed smile in his eye all the time. Hazlitt was nearly always in debt, but he accepted his impecuniosity with Micawber-like cheerfulness, and his last recorded words were, "Well, I've had a happy life."

A wandering, varied life, though devoid of striking incident, the life of a literary man perpetually struggling with financial difficulties, yet who wrote his best, perhaps, when duns were at the door. A man of gusty and wayward affections, an inveterate sentimentalist with little constancy of affection in his attachments with women, one is not surprised at the failure of his married life with the matter-of-fact Miss Stoddart, or the unsatisfactory character of his subsequent experiments in sentiment.

To those, however, who treated gently his moodiness (as did Charles Lamb), he was—sour as he might seem at times in their presence—passionately loyal; on the surface a cold man, he was at heart a deeply affectionate one. Like other men of his temper, if he fell foul of his friends sometimes he could not bear others doing so. If he was quick in detecting some fancied slight to himself he was equally sensitive on behalf of others.

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As a boy of eight he had written to his father :—

“ If we had not came to America we should not have been away from one another. I think, for my part, it would have been a great deal better if the white people had not found it out. Let the others have it to themselves for it was made for them.” \*

“ The child is father of the man.” He was quite ready to abuse Columbus at the prospect of a personal separation for a few weeks.

To find the true man one must read his writings; a couple of essays will tell more than the completest biography of outward events, and his writings are full of a brilliant suggestiveness, a freshness of thought, a lucidity of imagination. One of the finest critics in an age of fine critics, to have read Hazlitt is an epoch in one's literary life, because to have read him once means that you will read him again and again with increasing pleasure and appreciation.

A masterful, erratic genius; a strange, complex, interesting personality, and an enduring power in English letters.

\* *Memoirs of William Hazlitt* (WILLIAM CAREW HAZLITT). Vol. I.

## THOMAS DE QUINCEY

As one of the interesting vagabonds of literature Thomas de Quincey takes his place beside William Hazlitt. Civilisation has no charm for such men, and the ordinary routine of life irks them. For intellectual stamina and sheer dynamic power Hazlitt is certainly superior. As a critic he had a keener eye, a mellower taste; as a man his was the more commanding personality. But as a literary artist De Quincey has no rival in his own peculiar province, and as a man, with all his eccentricities, his puerilities, there was a certain gracious charm about his character to which Hazlitt assuredly could lay no claim. And a vagabond always, whether in the outer world or in the world of the imagination.

From early days, when as a boy he slept on the bare hillsides in Wales, cheerfully trusting to some chance kindness for food and drink, throughout his London struggles and his peregrinations in "stoney-hearted Oxford Street," down to the days of his brilliant reputation in Edinburgh, he was the same fantastic dreamer, restless spirit, grotesque child. Yes, he was a vagabond child. He never grew up, he never gained experience, and was even less familiar with the ways of the world than Leigh Hunt. Fleeced of his

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money when he was a struggling journalist in London, and the easiest dupe possible for the unscrupulous, he never became cynical or lost faith in human nature. He was as generous and tender-hearted as Lamb. Fame and affluence came but the vagabond child never changed. His friends at Edinburgh rarely knew where to find him, and when they chanced on him he was as meanly dressed as if he had scarcely a penny in the world. Were he wanted for a dinner-party—and there was a fine wisdom in his conversation—it was the hardest thing in the world to persuade him to come. And if he did come he presented the strangest appearance in his tattered attire. But that was a slight set-off to his companionship. Like Coleridge, however, when he had a fancy for his company he would stay on in the most unexpected way, at times sublimely oblivious to any inconvenience he might be occasioning—a stay of some weeks might be—so that the difficulty of persuading him to come shrank into insignificance beside the task of suggesting to him to go. A story is told in the life of Christopher North how that he dined with the Professor one night, was detained for the night by a heavy storm of rain, and prolonged his impromptu visit for a year.

Of the merit of his own work he had a just appreciation, but of its financial value not the slightest, and he made a strange figure seeking out editors and publishers when he was sixty, with a big reputation, as if he were the veriest tyro hawking articles. But he liked it. One feels sure he liked the shiftless,

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nomadic life. To have regarded his fame as a sound business asset would have annoyed him extremely. He loved uncertainties and peradventures. And so he made even the actualities of his life seem unreal and illusory. At one time it has been said he went into hiding to avoid arrest for debt, when all the time large sums of money were due to him and his debts were quite insignificant.

But I may be reminded that he was an inveterate "opium-eater," that his eccentricities were doubtless due to the effect of the drug upon his nervous system. No doubt many of his wonderful fancies may be traced to the stimulus of the narcotic.

But opium merely unlocked the treasure casket. To assert, as some have done, that De Quincey's personal peculiarities and "impassioned prose" are the result of opium eating is beside the mark. It were as correct to say that Elia's essays may be explained in terms of porter, and that Hazlitt's bitter brilliance is the result of taking strong tea.

The vagabond is born not made, and literary fame may not be purchased in medicine phials.

The friend of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Lamb and Hazlitt, his admiration for the Lake Poet was greater even than that of Hazlitt's. It is interesting to note how this admiration for the genius of Wordsworth, accompanied by ample appreciation of his defects as a man and master, characterised men so different in temperament as those that went to make up the Lamb circle. Towards Lamb and Coleridge he was greatly

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attracted, and for Lamb especially entertained a strong affection. But his appreciation of Hazlitt was modified by his inability to attune himself to Hazlitt's curious moods.

There was a touch of the vagabond about Coleridge, no little also, to adapt Henley's verdict on Stevenson, of the Shorter Catechist. But there was nothing of the preacher in De Quincey. Yet deep in his soul there was that love of mysticism, that passion for the half lights of mediævalism we find in Coleridge. His spiritual affinities with Coleridge were indeed considerable, and some of the weird effects he creates in prose are similar to those of "The Ancient Mariner" and "Christabel." But nothing that he has written in prose can take rank with these unique poems. The splendid *naïvete* and superb simplicity of Coleridge at his best is alien to the genius of De Quincey. Nor was he a force like Coleridge. Yet his influence upon English and American literature is marked. Hawthorne and Edgar Allen Poe owe no slight debt to his fantasies, and the prose style of Mr Swinburne bears distinct traces of De Quincey's rhythmic cadences.

In the more complex cadences of Ruskin's liquid prose, on the other hand, I can find no trace of any influence save that of the Old Testament, and possibly Sir Thomas Browne, a lineal ancestor of every "prose-poet."

Indeed, the special form of literary art—"prose-poetry"—which De Quincey took as his especial pro-

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vince did not emanate from him, though none have rivalled him in the extraordinary flow of his imagery. His literary style is like the purple haze of a summer evening through which we dimly apprehend the shape and contour of the scenery surrounding, all things taking on a strange hue and unsubstantiality.

The cadences of verse are not foreign to the Elizabethan prose writers, but the greatest stimulus to lyrical prose was probably given by the translation of the Bible in the reign of James. The melodious and gracious beauty of the Old Testament English vividly impressed the prose writers of succeeding generations. John Bunyan's wonderful allegory is couched in the ancient simplicity and noble diction of the Book he loved so well, and Milton's eloquent prose echoes the sonorous music of Israel.

Swift also may be instanced, who, harsh and savage as were his satires, yet glows with the apocalyptic passion of the Hebrew Prophets.

These men had "messages" of ethical import to deliver. De Quincey had no message. The true vagabond dislikes the pulpit: not that he has no beautiful things to say—usually, indeed, he is an inveterate idealist—but he is too restless to stand in one position, and if he mounted the pulpit stairs one minute would be sliding down the rails the next. The reader who seeks for solid intellectual fare had better avoid De Quincey, but if he has dined already, then the delicate, literary confections of the author of the *Confessions of an Opium Eater* will serve admirably.

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Who better to assist one "to chew the cud of a by-gone vision?"

Impassioned prose meant to De Quincey something other than the lyrical prose of his predecessors. Perhaps "impassioned" is scarcely the right word for it. There is little of the fire and energy that gives the term a peculiar appropriation when applied to *Modern Painters* or some of Mr Swinburne's essays. The emotions are too attenuated, too elaborately beaten out, and the delicate rhythmic modulations of such dream-pieces as "Suspiria de Profundis" arrest us chiefly through their haunting rhythmic and imaginative sensibility.

A certain ghostly element pervades nearly everything that he has written; at times it gives his prose an atmosphere of eeriness that enthralls.

There are two sides to the imaginative faculty; one bathed in sunlight, the other in moonlight. Some writers, as Scott, excel in one, some, as Hawthorne, in another, a very few, like Shakespeare, in both. To writers such as De Quincey, Hawthorne and Edgar Allen Poe has been granted a peculiar gift of imparting the moonlight effects of imagination.

This power it is that gives the glamour and subtle suggestiveness to De Quincey's prose. What could be more delicately impressive than his description of his first eventful journey to London, the prelude to the terrible sufferings and privations he was to undergo.

"So sweet, so ghostly, in its soft, golden smiles, silent as a dream, and quiet as the dying trance of a



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saint, faded through all its stages this departing day, along the whole length of which I bade farewell for many a year to Wales, and farewell to summer. In the very aspect and the sepulchral stillness of the motionless day, as solemnly it wore away through morning, noontide, afternoon, to meet the darkness that was hurrying to swallow up its beauty, I had a fantastic feeling as though I read the very language of resignation when bending before some irresistible agency. And at intervals I heard—in how different a key!—the raving, the everlasting uproar of that dreadful metropolis, which at every step was coming nearer, and beckoning (as it seemed) to myself for purposes as dim, for issues as incalculable, as the path of cannon-shots fired at random and in darkness.

“For nearly two hours I had heard fierce winds arising, and the whole atmosphere had by this time become one vast laboratory of hostile movements in all directions. Such a chaos, such a distracting wilderness of dim sights and of those awful ‘sounds that live in darkness,’ never had I consciously witnessed. Rightly, and by a true instinct, had I made my farewell adieus to summer. All through the day, Wales and her grand mountain ranges—Penmaen-mawr, Snowdon, Cader Idris—had divided my thoughts with London. But now rose London, sole, dark, infinite, brooding over the whole capacities of my heart. Other object, other thought, I could not admit. Long before midnight the whole household

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(with the exception of a solitary waiter) had retired to rest. Two hours, at least, were left to me, after twelve o'clock had struck, for heart-shaking reflections. . . . The unusual dimensions of the rooms, especially their towering height, brought up continually and obstinately, through natural links of associated feelings or images, the mighty vision of London waiting for me afar off. An altitude of nineteen or twenty feet showed itself unavoidably upon an exaggerated scale in some of the smaller side-rooms, meant probably for cards or for refreshments. This single feature of the rooms, their unusual altitude, and the echoing hollowness which had become the exponent of that altitude, this one terrific feature (for terrific it was in the effect), together with crowding and evanescent images of the flying feet that so often had spread gladness through these halls on the wings of youth and hope at seasons when every room rang with music: all this, rising in tumultuous vision, whilst the dead hours of night were stealing along, all around me, household and town, sleeping, and whilst against the windows more and more the storm outside was raving, and to all appearance endlessly growing, threw me into the deadliest condition of nervous emotion under contradictory forces, high over which predominated horror recoiling from that unfathomed abyss in London into which I was now so wilfully precipitating myself."

A wonderful book, *The Confessions of an Opium Eater*, a fascinating human document revealing as

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strange and picturesque a figure as did the *Confessions of Rousseau*.

Everyone knows how the sad childhood and struggling youth of Charles Dickens powerfully affected his sensitive mind and gave to his pictures of poverty and distress such poignancy and amazing actuality.

But the sufferings of De Quincey, though probably more prolonged and severe, affect the reader of his autobiographical fragments far less acutely. And this is so because the writer dwells so comparatively slightly upon the pains and privations, and so insistently on the fantastic reveries and waking dreams they invoked.

Dickens could never recall his youthful days save with a hot shame of indignation. De Quincey treats his most painful experiences as so much material for his artistic powers. The anguish of the man was merged in the joy of the artist. There is the same deliberate self-consciousness in certain fine passages of the *Confessions* that we find in the *De Profundis* of a later artist in prose—Oscar Wilde.

To the fastidious artist, experiences which have racked the soul and left the flesh raw and quivering are matters for joy rather than regret. As Emerson says, "What would painter do, or what would poet or saint do, but for the crucifixions and hells?"

In his dealings with men and women he was tender and considerate, without the selfishness and self-absorption found in many with the artistic tempera-

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ment. But when he took pen in hand the man is merged in the maker of phrases. Take the following passage on his friend Lloyd, which is resonant with stately music:—

“ Charles Lloyd never returned to Brathay after he had once been removed from it, and the removal of his family soon followed. . . . But often and often, in years after all was gone, I have passed old Brathay, or have gone over purposely after dark, about the time when, for many a year, I used to go over to spend the evening; and seating myself on a stone by the side of the mountain river Brathay, have stayed for hours listening to the same sound to which so often Charles Lloyd and I used to hearken together with profound emotion and awe, the sound of pealing anthems, as if streaming from the open portals of some illimitable cathedral; for such a sound does actually arise, in many states of the weather, from the peculiar action of the river Brathay upon its rocky bed, and many times I have heard it, of a quiet night, when no stranger could have been persuaded to believe it other than the sound of choral chanting, distant, solemn, saintly. . . . Since the ruin or dispersion of that household, after the smoke had ceased to ascend from their hearth, or the garden walk to re-echo their voices, oftentimes, when lying by the river side, I have listened to the same aerial saintly sound, whilst looking back to that night, long hidden in the frost of receding years, when Charles and Sophia Lloyd, now lying in foreign graves, first dawned upon me, coming

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suddenly out of rain and darkness, then young, rich, happy, full of hope, belted with young children (of whom also most are long dead), and standing apparently on the verge of a labyrinth of golden hours."

Beautiful, no doubt, but even at his highest moment De Quincey lacked the supreme gift of the literary artist—simplicity. Almost every other qualification he had, but the absence of this massive elemental quality gives an air of preciousness to his work. The art of concealing art was denied him. Yet granting that, his effects are the effects of a brilliant virtuoso—few men fiddled more wonderful harmonics on the English language than De Quincey.

"De Quincey," said Leslie Stephen, "resembles the story-tellers mentioned by some Eastern travellers. So extraordinary is their power of face, and so skilfully modulated are the inflections of their voices, that even a European ignorant of the language can follow the narrative with absorbing interest. One may fancy that if De Quincey's language were emptied of all meaning whatever, the mere sound of the words would move us, as the lovely word *Mesopotamia* moved Whitefield's hearers." Like most writers who are temperamentally meditative and reflective, things heard appealed more powerfully than things seen. Like Wordsworth, he was "all ear." Prose in his hands becomes nearer akin to the art of music than to the art of painting, to which more usually literature approximates. But though musical, it is no chance melody, no Æolian strain that captures our fancy.

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Like one of Bach's fugues, it is built up deliberately and with mathematical precision. He was a dreamer, but he was also a logician. He spun cobwebs, truly, but if at a distance they seemed delicate, unsubstantial, hazy, a closer scrutiny would reveal the fine precision of lines and elaborate regularity of fretwork. Why the cobweb should be a synonym for chaotic, purposeless work, it is hard to see; as well take the spider who sits motionless in the web for a mystic shut off from all the affairs of life. Possibly flies occasionally take this view to their undoing.

Prose of this kind, personal, intimate, fantastic prose, lends itself readily to whimsicalities of humour. But the lighter moods ill-suited De Quincey's characteristics. He does not smile through his tears like Charles Lamb; his pathos and tenderness, exquisite in their way, lack the vibrant humanity of Elia. There are flashes of the same elfish love of exaggeration that was the salt of life to Lamb, but the humour is harder and coarser in texture. At least so it seems to me, though with some critics I know De Quincey takes a high place as humorist. But he is over fond of clowning. There is nothing very droll, for instance, in calling Josephus "Mr Joe," or Cicero "Kikero," and even in the famous essay on "Murder as One of the Fine Arts," where a certain paradoxical fun displays itself, there are passages of dismally forced hilarity.

He lacked the sense of actuality, the "sympathy with the seamy side of life," to quote Carlyle's suggestive phrase, which lies at the root of vital humour.

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But if this weakens certain aspects of his work, it strengthens others, especially the mystical suggestiveness of his writings.

No writer has given a more vivid impression of the mystery of London, the sense of immensity in its surging crowds, the tragic loneliness in its glittering thoroughfares, and for a delicate perception of the symbolism in ordinary sights and sounds few can surpass him. To him, "the knocking on the gate in *Macbeth*" assumes a strange, compelling significance. We realise the horror of the preceding scene in an unexpected way, and connect the world of brooding horrors with the world of palpitating reality. He is enamoured of the pageantry of life and his romantic sympathies attached themselves naturally to institutions made picturesque by the ivy and lichen of tradition. His Toryism lay in his attraction for mediævalism, "with lore far-brought from out the storied past." The baser elements of Toryism, however, found no soil in De Quincey's mind. His sympathies with the poor were very real and profound, as indeed they had reason to be when one remembers his experiences of them.

His pity for suffering humanity was no mere sentimentalism, but gave a strong, moral idealism to his thought. The genuine vagabond, with all his wilfulness and eccentricities, has always a sound heart, and a special tenderness for the alien and outcast. The genuine vagabond, moreover, is further known by this—the life and fascination of the town may attract

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him, but the call of the earth is the one imperative voice he heeds. Hazlitt and De Quincey, no less than Thoreau, Whitman, Borrow and Jeffries, loved better than all the brilliance of the city the "good, gigantic smile o' the brown old earth."

De Quincey was always looking back in his successful Edinburgh days to the quiet, delightful time at Grasmere, and to the little familiar rose-covered cottage where he spent so many happy years.



## OUTLINE SCHEME OF READING FOR STUDENTS

JOHN HENRY NEWMAN (1801-1890).

- 1801. Born, London, February 21.
- 1833. *The Arians of the Fourth Century* (first book).
- 1841. Tract XC.
- 1845. Received into the Roman Church.  
„ *Development of Christian Doctrine*.
- 1848. *Loss and Gain*.
- 1855. *Callista*.
- 1864-5. *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*.
- 1870. *A Grammar of Assent*.
- 1890. Died August 11.

Excellent short biography by Dr Barry (Hodder & Stoughton). An interesting monograph, also by R. H. Hutton (Methuen & Co.). Mr Hutton's best study of Newman, however, is in the volume, *Modern Guides in Matters of Faith*; he writes from a liberal, High Anglican point of view. Students should read the *Apologia* first of all—a fine piece of spiritual autobiography. This may be followed by the essay on *Development* and *A Grammar of Assent*. The sermons are published in a uniform series of volumes, and if less picturesque than F. W. Robertson's, and inferior in depth of thought to James Martineau's, are certainly among the finest sermons in the language.

As regards criticism of Newman's work, consult the writings of Mr Wilfred Ward (especially *Problems and Persons, Witnesses to the Unseen*), and of Mr W. S. Lilly for the Roman Catholic point of view; of R. H. Hutton

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(*Cardinal Newman, Modern Guides in Matters of Faith, Contemporary Thought and Thinkers*) for the broad Anglican point of view; of James Martineau (notably *Essays, Reviews and Addresses*, vol. 1) for the Unitarian standpoint; and of Leslie Stephen (*The Agnostic's Apology*) where the Agnostic standpoint is ably indicated.

The most violent attack on Newman by the author of *Philomythus* should not be read until the student has grasped the general outline of Newman's thought and is able to judge for himself. *Philomythus* is a brilliant but one-sided presentment of Newman's teaching.

### JAMES MARTINEAU (1805-1900).

- 1836. *The Rationale of Religious Enquiry*.
- 1841. Professor of Mental and Moral Philosophy at Manchester New College.
- 1843-7. *Endeavours after the Christian Life* (two vols., sermons).
- 1857. Pastor, Little Portland Street Chapel.
- 1858. *Studies of Christianity*.
- 1876-80. *Hours of Thought on Sacred Things* (two vols., sermons).
- 1882. *A Study of Spinoza*.
- 1885. *Types of Ethical Theory* (two vols., historical and critical).
- 1888. *A Study of Religion* (two vols., mainly philosophical).
- 1890. *The Sect of Authority and Religion* (his last word on religious philosophy).
- 1891. *Essays, Reviews and Addresses* (collection of articles ranging over many years).
- 1900. Died, London.

The standard biography, *Life and Letters of James Martineau*, by Prof. Drummond (two vols.: Nisbet & Co.).

## FOR STUDENTS

A brief biography and one recommended as a preliminary study, by Prof. Estlin Carpenter. The student is advised to read some of the shorter philosophical and critical studies in the *Essays, Reviews and Addresses* before essaying the larger works. The latter should be read in historical order, as they supplement one another very largely.

For criticism of Martineau's philosophy see studies by Prof. Upton, Prof. Henry Jones, Dr A. W. Mellone (*Leaders of Religious Thought*), all more or less sympathetic and helpfully expository. See R. H. Hutton (*Contemporary Thought and Thinkers*) for an appreciation, but more distinctively theological criticism. The best statement of the materialist's position is in Dr Maudsley's *Natural Causes and Supernatural Seemings*.

Students not versed in ethical philosophy may usefully turn to *A History of Ethics* by Prof. Sidgwick, before reading Martineau's philosophical writings.

An excellent analysis of Dr. Martineau's teachings is found in Mr. A. W. Jackson's monograph, *James Martineau*.

### PROF. HUXLEY (1825-1893).

- 1825. Born at Ealing, May 4.
- 1851. Elected Fellow of the Royal Society.
- 1852. Received Gold Medal of the Royal Society.
- 1857. Appointed Fullerian Professor of Comparative Anatomy at the Royal Institution.
- 1859. Reviewed the *Origin of Species* in *The Times* (26th December).
- 1863. Published *Man's Place in Nature*.
- 1869. Joined the Metaphysical Society.
- 1870. Elected member of the first School Board of London.  
„ Published *Lay Sermons*.
- 1881. Published *Science and Culture*.
- 1893. Delivered Romanes' Lecture at Oxford (*Evolution and Ethics*).

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1893-4. *The Collected Essays* (nine vols. : Macmillan & Co.).

1895. Died June 29.

The standard biography by his son, Leonard Huxley. A good, critical biography (especially valuable in pointing out constructive aspects of Huxley's work) by Mr Edward Clodd (Blackwood & Son. 2s. 6d.).

By way of introduction the article on Huxley in *Chambers's Encyclopædia of English Literature* may be read.

From the general reader's point of view, who does not wish to study the more technical aspects of Huxley's scientific work, the volumes entitled *Science and Education* and *Evolution and Ethics* are the most suggestive.

### WILLIAM WORDSWORTH (1770-1850).

1770. Born at Cockermouth, Cumberland, April 7.

1798. *Lyrical Ballads*.

1843. Poet Laureate.

1850. Died at Rydal Mount.

The best short biographical study by F. W. H. Myers. The best critical study by Prof. Raleigh. The best exposition of his religious philosophy by Rev. Stopford Brooke (*Theology in the English Poets*). An excellent account of his work and of his "place" among the "Revolutionary" Poets by Prof. C. H. Herford (*The Age of Wordsworth*). The best selection of his poems by Matthew Arnold, with fine critical introduction. Admirable essay on "the ethics of Wordsworth" by Leslie Stephen (*Hours in a Library*). An interesting volume of essays entitled (*Wordsworthiana*). Helpful essays by Mr W. J. Dawson (*Makers of Modern Poetry*: Hodder & Stoughton). Mr Dawson has published three excellent volumes for the literary student, *Makers of Modern Poetry*, *Makers of Modern Prose*, *Makers of Modern Fiction*.

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### JOHN KEATS (1795-1821).

1795. Born, Moorfields, London, October 29.

1817. *Poems* first published.

1821. Died Rome.

An excellent biographical study by Mr Sidney Colvin ("English Men of Letters" Series). One of the best editions of his poems, *The Poetical Works of John Keats*, edited by H. Buxton Forman (Reeves & Turner). See, for the literary tendencies of his time, *The History of Romanticism in the Nineteenth Century*, by Prof. Henry A. Beers (Kegan Paul & Co.). Suggestive essays by J. R. Lowell and Matthew Arnold.

### DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI (1828-1882).

1828. Born at London, May 12.

1870. *Poems* (first volume).

1880. „ (second volume).

1882. Died, Birchingtton, April 9.

Best biographical study by Mr E. F. Benson. *The Life and Letters*, edited by Mr Wm. Rossetti, throws interesting sidelights on his personality. Cheap edition in one volume of his poems, edited by Wm. Rossetti. An excellent appreciation of the poet in *Living English Poets* by H. Buxton Forman. See also *History of Romanticism in the Nineteenth Century* for account of the pre-Raphaelite movement.

### CHARLES DICKENS (1812-1870).

1812. Born, Portsmouth, February 7.

1833. *A Dinner at Poplar Walk* (first original paper published in *Monthly Magazine*).

1836. *Sketches by Boz*.

„ *Pickwick Papers* (first number).

## OUTLINE SCHEME OF READING

- 1838. *Oliver Twist*.
- 1839. *Nicholas Nickleby*.
- 1840. *The Old Curiosity Shop*.
- 1841. *Barnaby Rudge*.
- 1842. *American Notes*.
- 1843. *Martin Chuzzlewit*.
- „ *The Christmas Carol*.
- 1846. *Dombey and Son*.
- 1849. *David Copperfield*.
- 1852. *Bleak House*.
- 1854. *Hard Times*.
- 1855. *Little Dorrit*.
- 1859. *A Tale of Two Cities*.
- 1861. *The Uncommercial Traveller*.
- 1864. *Our Mutual Friend*.
- 1870. *Mystery of Edwin Drood* (unfinished).
- „ Died at Gad's Hill, June 6.

*Life* by John Forster (an abridged edition recently published, but the student is recommended to study the original). Best critical study by George Gissing (Blackwood & Son. 2s. 6d.). Interesting study from French point of view, by Taine, *History of English Literature*, vol. iv. (translated by Van Laun). Forster's *Life* may be supplemented by Mr F. Kitton's biography. The Dickens' student should consult *The Childhood and Youth of Dickens*, by Robert Langton (Hutchison & Co.), and *The Real Dickens Land* by H. Snowden Ward (Chapman & Hall). There is a useful *Dickens' Dictionary* in the *Daily News Memorial Edition*.

### WILLIAM HAZLITT (1778-1830).

- 1778. Born, Maidstone, April 10.
- 1805. *Essays on the Principles of Human Action*.
- 1806. *Free Thoughts on Public Affairs*.
- 1817. *The Round Table* (Essays on Men and Manners).

## FOR STUDENTS

1817. *Characters of Shakespeare.*

1818-21. *Lectures on the English Poets.*

„ *Lectures on Dramatic Literature of Age of Elizabeth.*

1821. *Table Talk.*

1825. *Spirit of the Age* (contains some of his finest work).

1828-30. *Life of Buonaparte.*

*Memoirs* by William Carew Hazlitt (1867). This is the only authoritative life. See also *Four Generations of a Literary Family*, by W. Carew Hazlitt (1897 : George Redway). A good short monograph by Augustine Birrell. See also excellent essay by Leslie Stephen (*Hours in a Library*). Perhaps the best introduction to his personality and work is a volume edited by Mr Alexander Ireland, the best (and only complete) edition of his work, published by J. M. Dent & Co.

THOMAS DE QUINCEY (1785-1859).

1785. Born in Manchester, August 15.

1821. *Confessions of an Opium Eater* (*London Magazine*).

1828. In Edinburgh. Contributed to *Blackwood*, *The Quarterly*, *Tait's Magazine*, *Hogg's Instructor*.

1844. *The Logic of Political Economy.*

1859. Died in Edinburgh, December 8.

Collected edition of his writings, edited by David Masson, in fourteen vols. An excellent little monograph by Mr H. S. Salt ("Bell's Miniature Series of Great Writers"). See also *De Quincey*, by David Masson ("English Men of Letters" Series). Perhaps the best edition of *The Confessions of an Opium Eater* is that edited by Dr Richard Garnett (Kegan Paul). An interesting collection of *personalia*, *De Quincey and His Friends*, written and collected by James Hogg (1895). See Mr W. J. Dawson's *Essay on De Quincey in Makers of Modern Prose* (Hodder & Stoughton).

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